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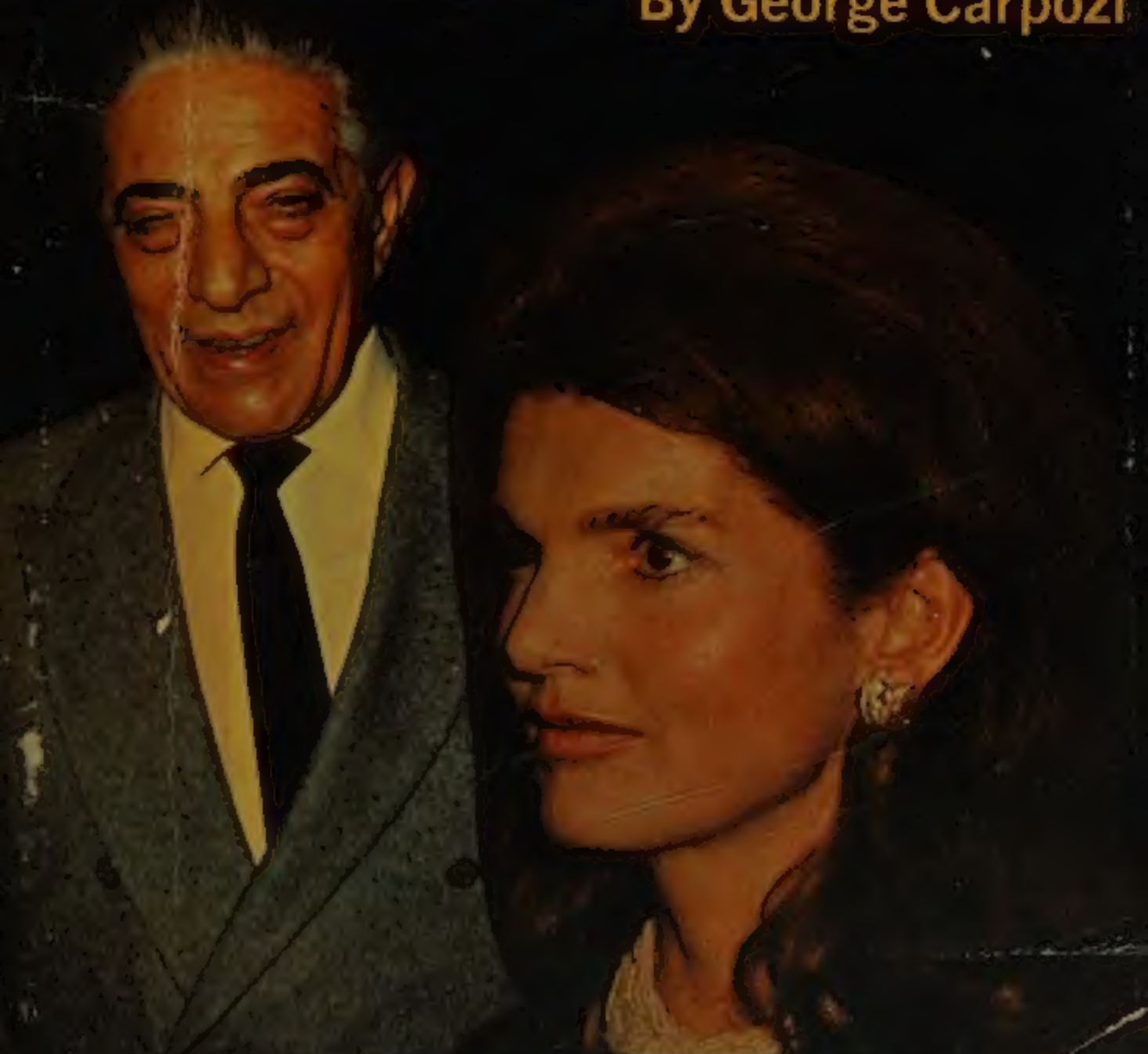
JACKIE & ARI

FOR LOVE OR MONEY?

By George Carpozi



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JACKIE AND ONASSIS: THE STORY OF A LOVE AFFAIR

When one of the world's richest and most powerful men suddenly and unexpectedly married its most beautiful and desirable woman, everyone, everywhere, wanted to know all the details about the most celebrated lovers of our time. In this fascinating account, George Carpozi reveals the drives and motives, the jealousies and passions that led two people, each with more than ordinary emotional and psychological needs, into the marriage of the century.

GEORGE CARPOZI is a well-known metropolitan newspaperman and frequent contributor to national magazines. Author of several bestselling biographies, among them the sensational *The Hidden Side of Jacqueline Kennedy,* he is uniquely qualified by experience and knowledge to write this, *the* inside story of Jackie Kennedy, her billionaire husband, and the glittering world in which they live.

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To Aristotle and Jackie:

καί εἰς Ἀνωτερα . . .*

* On to bigger things . . .

Chapter 1

UP FROM RAGS?

SOMEONE once said that Aristotle Socrates Onassis is the kind of man Horatio Alger might have invented if he had smoked opium.

If you consider the fact that he had only sixty dollars in his pocket when he arrived aboard a foul, crowded refugee ship in Buenos Aires, and that today he is a billionaire, then Onassis surely is an Alger hero.

But he was a mere seventeen years old at the time —and what boy of that age had even sixty dollars in his pocket in 1923?

Onassis even then considered himself rich.

Eight years later, at the age of twenty-five, he considered himself a little richer—he had made his first million.

Before he was thirty, he had become a shipping magnate and was a multimillionaire.

At forty-seven, he was considered one of the richest men in the world.

Today, at sixty-two, he is *the* richest, for he not

only has unbelievable wealth, but Jacqueline Kennedy as well.

More than an Alger hero, Onassis could be called a character out of contemporary Greek mythology. Although he was born in Turkey and spent a good many of his early years in the Argentine, he is a full-blooded Greek.

His father, Homer Socrates, was a wealthy and influential Greek tobacco merchant whose ancestors had lived in the thriving port city of Smyrna for generations.

Aristotle Socrates was born on January 15, 1906.

About his classical forenames, Onassis has explained: "It was a local custom. The Greeks of the homeland mostly give to their children Christian church names. But in the colonies, on the Anatolian coast of Turkey, they used classic Greek names to affirm their Hellenic tradition."

When he was five years old, his mother, Penelope, died. His father remarried two years later, but Aristotle's religiously strict grandmother, Gethsemane Onassis, appropriated the role of raising the young boy. Onassis today has vivid memories of his grandmother, his beloved "Yia Yia."

"Each year at Easter she made the long pilgrimage to Jerusalem, a trip that took three days each way. When she returned, she was loaded down with rosaries, icons, and religious lithographs, some very large. She hung some of them over my bed . . . I remember particularly one scene that showed a meadow with lambs and happy children dancing above the face of the devil spitting fire.

"When I asked her what it meant, she told me that this was a representation of heaven and hell, and if I am a good boy I will go to the higher place, if I am bad I will go down below.

"To tell the truth, I still don't know where I am going."

Aristotle, who had a sister, Artemis, and two half-sisters, Merope and Calliroy, born of his father's second marriage, attended private schools and lived through a period of great unrest that was marked by Turkey's entry into World War I on the side of the Central Powers. It took the age-old hatred between the Turks and Greeks to make it possible for Onassis to be what he is today, instead of what he might have been—simply a prosperous tobacco merchant.

Smyrna was spared from the onslaught of the fighting and at the peace conference of 1919, Greece, which put forward its claims to the city, was authorized to occupy it.

Meanwhile, Aristotle was graduated from the Evangeliki Scholi (Evangelical High School), the renowned Greek school founded in the eighteenth century and conducted under British patronage. He was sixteen and was looking forward to attending Oxford the following fall.

But in late summer the fiery Mustafa Kemal, leading a national upsurge, sent his Turkish legions to oust the Greek occupation forces. Caught in the squeeze were the more than three million Greek residents of Smyrna and other coastal communities. The Kemalists sacked and burned the city, killed thousands of its inhabitants, and forced thousands of

others to flee. More than three-fifths of the city was destroyed.

The metropolis suffered frightfully and so did the Onassis family. Three of Aristotle's uncles were hanged by the Turks, an aunt and her baby died in a burning church, another uncle collapsed and died of shock.

The boy's stepmother, Helen, and his sisters were allowed to go to Greece but his father was confined to a concentration camp. The family house was taken over by the Army for a general's quarters and "Yia Yia" Gethsemane was compelled to go and live with a sister.

Onassis ran errands for the Turkish general, who took a liking to the young boy. One of the more notable missions Aristotle performed in a city where liquor was banned was obtaining retsina and ouzo for the officer.

In his rounds, Aristotle also met the American vice-consul, who came into the neighborhood one day to rescue a stranded American citizen. In questioning the lad, he learned of the tragedy that had befallen his family and how desperate Aristotle was to win his father's freedom. The vice-consul provided him with a safe-conduct pass which enabled Aristotle to reach his father's office, where a large quantity of cash and securities were stashed in the still unlooted safe.

He was now able to buy food and other necessities for his father and some of his impoverished countrymen, which he managed to smuggle into the prison on visiting days.

A short time later, Aristotle organized a protest

march of some fifty influential Turkish merchants and friends of his father. They descended on the jail with banners and signs urging his father's release.

The demonstration is credited with having saved the elder Onassis' life—many of the other prisoners were put to death—but it did not win his release.

Aristotle's actions finally resulted in his arrest, too.

But he escaped before he could be put in the lockup, and he fled into the U. S. Marine Zone.

There, with the help of the vice-consul, who dressed him in an American sailor's uniform, he was put aboard a U. S. destroyer bound for the island of Lesbos, a refugee depot.

From that haven he boarded a ship for Greece, learned from other refugees that his grandmother had died, and decided that he had to do something for his father, who was still a prisoner in Smyrna.

He sailed for Constantinople where he knew his father had many friends with influence among the business and industrial community, and pleaded with them to obtain his father's release.

Aristotle was told it would take a great amount of money to do anything.

"Here," the youth said, "is this enough?"

He pulled out of his pocket five thousand Turkish pounds, about twenty-five thousand dollars.

It might just do, he was told.

And a short time after Aristotle returned to Athens, where the family was staying, the elder Onassis was released by the Turks.

When his father arrived in Athens, Aristotle was

astonished to learn that he had blundered in paying the bribe.

"I was tried and acquitted," his father said. "I was released without anyone's intervention or payment."

Aristotle felt humiliated, and at this point there are two versions of what happened next.

One account says that the elder Onassis had tried to salvage what was left of his once prosperous business, but could not make a go of it because of Greece's faltering post-war economy, now weakened by the weight of 1,500,000 Greek refugees from Turkey.

His drastically reduced income was not enough to support his wife and four children, and the widows of his brothers and their families.

A family council decided that seventeen-year-old Aristotle, the only son, was the most likely candidate to rebuild the family's fortunes. The family scraped enough money together, bought him steamer passage to South America, and with one hundred dollars for cash reserves, Aristotle sailed for Argentina.

Another account of his early life claims that Aristotle's pride had suffered so terribly over the twenty-five thousand dollars he squandered needlessly for his father's release that he underwent a traumatic change —one which gave him the drive and ambition that ultimately catapulted him to wealth so fabulous as almost to be beyond the comprehension of the ordinary mortal. He turned over what cash and securities he was holding for his father and kept only two hundred and fifty dollars for himself.

"With this money," he said, "I am going to seek my own fortune in South America."

Many years later, Onassis recalled those poignant first hours aboard the 8,000-ton *Thomasso di Savoia*, steaming through the Mediterranean from Genoa to Buenos Aires with a thousand emigrants.

"After we left Genoa, as we passed the lights of Imperia, San Remo, Monte Carlo, Nice, hundreds of emigrants would cry out the name of each place in chorus. For the first time I saw Monte Carlo with its lights blazing, and then we went down into the hold of the ship, where emigrants were herded together in dormitories of three hundred. Those were really the gala lights of Monte Carlo."

Several hundred million dollars later, Onassis was to own the controlling interests in Monte Carlo's famed Casino, the Hotel de Paris, three other hotels, the only theater in Monte Carlo, the golf course at Montagel, and considerable other choice real estate.

In fact, he bought most of the principality of Monaco.

But that, for a man whose immense wealth and power were magnetically to attract the world's elite —Jacqueline Kennedy included—was small potatoes.

Chapter 2

THE FIRST MILLION

Back in 1953 when an up-and-coming young Democratic Senator from Massachusetts named John Fitzgerald Kennedy married Jacqueline Bouvier, there was such a thing as society. It was located in the big homes and the right clubs, and the newlyweds belonged to that society.

They were what we now call the "in" people. To travel in their league required a blueblood background and, more often than not, great wealth.

Jackie's stepfather, Hugh D. Auchincloss, was considered quite rich, but Jack's father, Joseph P. Kennedy, was far richer, a millionaire many times over.

While the Kennedys did not descend from a strictly social background the way Jackie's ancestors did, they nevertheless achieved acceptance in the big homes and the right clubs because Papa Joe had served as U. S. Ambassador to Great Britain during World War II.

In short, it took more than money to get into the social climb.

A man who has, one way or another, amassed a fortune, is viewed by an envious world with awe or hate. Nearly half a century ago, a man so viewed was Basil Zaharoff, who moved in the shadows across the face of Europe making millions out of munitions and—as the cynics charged—wars as he went. In the late 1940s the gnome-like Armenian, Calouste S. Gulbenkian, wrapped himself in a mantle of anonymity which almost, but not quite, concealed the fact that from a modest hotel room in Lisbon he controlled the largest private oil empire and watched over the most incredibly priceless private art collection in the world.

And there were many who had whispered about Joseph Kennedy's ruthlessness in his rise to riches, but once he had moved from industry and business to diplomacy the wrath and scorn of press and public diminished.

It was a short step to the next plateau—society.

At the time of Jack's and Jackie's Newport wedding in 1953, European newspapermen were no longer raking Gulbenkian over the coals. They had found another target: Aristotle Socrates Onassis, whom they were lashing from stem to stern in a sea of angry words whipped up by the many questionable multimillion dollar deals he had pulled.

One such story cost him a small fortune because it hit directly at his shipping interests. Aristotle was furious, and from then on he made it a point in his dealings with the press to strike back with the rough edge of his tongue.

That same year, one of his intimates, Sir Winston Churchill, a former journalist himself, took the

Greek moneybags aside and scolded him for being such a straight-talker. "Aristotle, why not try to make the press your friends?" Churchill said with great wisdom. "Take them into your confidence, get to know them personally."

Onassis was greatly impressed by the statesman's counsel. He looked at his image, agreed he didn't like what he saw, so he set out to woo the press. He hired a British public relations man, and on his recommendation flew a party of eight journalists on a private plane junket to Saudi Arabia, with whose government he had just signed a new oil agreement.

It was the tycoon's first forthright and willing exposure to news media.

Not long ago, one of the party, Jeffrey Blyth, the London *Daily Mail*'s chief correspondent in New York, recalled vividly the five-day splurge that Onassis footed: "We had a whale of an exhausting time. Onassis, boundingly energetic, proved to be a tremendous character; if you play it straight with him, he'll do the same by you. Like most Greeks, he's proud, fiercely independent, and can be highly demanding."

That same year of 1953 is important for another major development besides the marriage of Jacqueline and Jack Kennedy and the emergence of Aristotle Socrates Onassis as a flesh and blood person. It was the year that society moved from the right clubs to the nightclubs and ushered in the era of Café Society.

Onassis, who had never had credentials of background and breeding to merit standing with the blue-

blood crowd, found himself being wooed by the new generation of society folk, and suddenly he was a world celebrity.

When Cleveland Amory asked Onassis how he became that world celebrity, he confided: "You become a celebrity by controlling the world's playthings. If I hadn't bought Monte Carlo, I would have remained a plain ordinary businessman."

And if he had remained a plain ordinary businessman and had not been advised by Winston Churchill to improve his image, Aristotle Onassis might still not be ashamed to admit that when he landed in Buenos Aires in 1923, his first job was washing dishes. But when one ascends that rarefied strata which is society, it becomes repulsive to talk about one's lowly or desultory beginnings, especially so for one of Onassis' stature.

A vital aspect of modern Greek mythology tends nearly always to credit the rise of any prominent figure of Hellenic ancestry to a start as a dishwasher or counterman—Spiro T. Agnew worked in his father's restaurant before he went on to become Governor of Maryland and a Vice Presidential candidate, and Spiros Skouras dunked dishes in his early days in this country before he discovered the nickelodeon and 20th Century-Fox. Neither Agnew nor Skouras ever denied they washed dishes.

So it was with Aristotle Socrates Onassis—until 1953.

Then, probably guided by his press agent's eagerness to change his image for easier acceptance among the denizens of the social orbit into which Onassis had

been rocketed, he no longer recalled ever having worked as a dishwasher or a waiter in those first months following his arrival in Buenos Aires.

He now even tries to pooh-pooh any rags-to-riches tale.

"My father," he says, "was the wealthiest tobacco merchant in Smyrna." Which is, of course, only part of the truth.

Onassis today only remembers that he was a swart, aggressive seventeen-year-old who settled in a modest (not shabby as he once used to say) rooming house and landed his first job as a laborer with the local affiliate of the International Telephone and Telegraph Company.

Not too long afterward, he was slotted into another job with I.T.&T., as a night telephone operator, then went on to tobacco importing, then exporting of Argentine grains, hides, and wools, and eventually—but by no means finally—into shipping.

But first of all, Onassis was a dishwasher and a waiter—even if he may feel ashamed to mention that fact to the famous who stalk him now, and whom he often stalks, too.

In talking about his "first job," which paid him twenty-five cents an hour, Onassis tries to unravel one of the earliest mysteries about him, which has lingered to the present—his age.

To work as a laborer for I.T.&T., he had to present a document much like a visa which indicated where he was born and when he arrived in Argentina. But there was one hitch: being only seventeen, he would have to produce a guardian. And since he knew no

one who could even pose in that role for him, there was only one other alternative: he would have to fake his age and make himself older.

Onassis says he concocted his fraudulent birthdate by giving authorities the date of his arrival in Buenos Aires and adding six years to his age. Thus his passport since the 1920s has always listed his date of birth as **September 21, 1900.**

And because it was considered "low class" in those days to say you were born in Smyrna, he applied another bit of fakery by putting Salonika down as his place of origin.

Image improvement had started early in life for Onassis.

So did status betterment. His explanation for seeking to move on from laborer to switchboard operator was perhaps more revealing than he intended it to be: "They were switching to dial phones, so I did not have to know Spanish very well to do the work. But by listening in on the calls, I could learn the language . . . you see? Also, by working at night, I had the days free to look around to see what else I might find to do.

"After a year, I found what I was looking for with a Greek importer, an old acquaintance of my father and a distant cousin named Constantine Konialides, who was one of the first of the family to settle in Argentina. I persuaded him to expand his business to include import of Near Eastern tobaccos, which my father had dealt in, and which I thought would market easily **in the Argentine.**

"Up to then the tobacco came chiefly from Cuba and the United States."

His judgment was unerring. Within a matter of months Onassis' employer was doing a thriving trade in Turkish and Greek tobaccos. Not only were they importing the leaves, they were now also manufacturing cigarettes on a modest scale.

Business was so good that Onassis decided he ought to get a piece of the action instead of merely working for a relatively paltry salary.

He set up office in his furnished room and struck out on his own.

There were no hard feelings with Konialides, for in years to come his name would show up as titular owner of some of Onassis' mighty fleet of oil tankers.

From his room, Onassis moved his business to a small store, hired a couple of helpers, and built up a thriving enterprise in tobacco import and cigarette manufacturing. Then he branched out into export, handling such commodities as Argentine grain, hides, wools, and whale oil.

Now we approach another area of his interesting success story which is clouded with uncertainty. In his authorized biography, an uncritical tome called *Onassis* and written by Willi Frischauer, nothing is mentioned about this activity and one is told that Aristotle's tobacco business brought him to the threshold of his first million dollars at the precocious age of twenty-five.

But there is another version that Onassis' friends used to talk about—but don't anymore. Aristotle himself has admitted he had saved twenty thousand

dollars by the time he was nineteen—barely more than two years after starting with nothing! But he never clearly spelled out just how he managed to make that money.

The story goes that Onassis and Konialides lent all their savings—around one thousand dollars—to a Norwegian whaling-fleet owner who was desperate for funds to finance an Antarctic whaling expedition. And this investment is said to have brought back unexpectedly rich dividends which put Aristotle on the highroad to high finance.

Some who today are still not fond of Onassis have other versions of how he made his first million, and they are less complimentary.

But the impressive quality of it all is that Onassis became one of the first young millionaires of the world, regardless of how it was done.

Such an achievement did not escape the attention of the Greek government in Athens, which nine years previously had denied citizenship to Aristotle because emigrants from Smyrna were considered Turkish subjects. Now the Greek legation in Buenos Aires approached the young man and told him that Athens wanted him to handle negotiations on its behalf for a commercial treaty with Argentina.

Onassis set up a pact for a transatlantic exchange based principally on Greek tobacco and Argentine beef, a treaty that delighted government officials in Athens.

As a reward, he was made honorary Greek consul general in Buenos Aires, a position that enabled Onassis to acquire and absorb considerable inside

information that he would later translate to pecuniary profit.

The immediate result of the treaty was, of course, that Onassis was able to become one of Argentina's chief importers of Balkan tobacco, but that was a mere drop in the bucket compared with his next venture.

Again aided by information he was privy to as consul general, he learned that the Canadian National Steamship Lines was going on the rocks because of the Depression—this was 1931 now—and was compelled to put up some thirty ocean-going freighters for sale in Montreal.

Incredible as it may sound, freighters that had cost two million dollars to build in the early twenties were on the block for twenty thousand dollars each—a mere one per cent of their cost.

"You could get a 10,000-ton ship for the price of a Rolls-Royce," Onassis reminisced years later, his voice edged with enchantment by the nostalgic recollection of how he had launched himself in the shipping business.

Still, buying a freighter at that time was a gamble that few investors were willing to take. Trade was deep in the doldrums. A near-empty freighter on a single ninety-day transatlantic round trip could run a loss twice as great as the vessel's purchase price.

To most other people this was the midst of a world-wide depression. To Onassis, who had been prospering steadily on tobacco trade and other commodities, this was the time when opportunity was just begging him to make his move.

With an eye for a bargain and a hankering for the

sea, and bound by the fascination that shipping has always had for the sons of Greece, ever since the beauty of Helen of Troy launched a thousand Greek ships into battle, Onassis took the plunge.

With cousin Konialides and a few friends in the Greek community of Buenos Aires putting up what cash Onassis didn't wish to risk, they bought not one but six of the Canadian National freighters at the bargain basement price of twenty thousand dollars each, or a total of one hundred and twenty thousand dollars. The ships originally had cost twelve million dollars.

And it was out to sea for Aristotle Socrates Onassis.

Chapter 3

BUILDING THE EMPIRE

The Depression was the Great Equalizer. It brought Wall Street brokers and Greek dishwashers together in the same bread lines.

Millions were affected by the poverty and hard times wrought by a paralyzed economy. Many millionaires were wiped out, but many others used their wealth to build greater fortunes.

In the United States, one millionaire who did well through those tormented early thirties was Joseph P. Kennedy, who amassed a good deal of his fortune through investment in depressed businesses.

Another American who forded the crisis was Jacqueline Kennedy's father, John Vernou Bouvier III, an investment broker. Thus Jackie, who was born in 1929—the start of the Depression—never knew what hard times were. The family lived in a sumptuous New York apartment, summered in Southampton on Long Island, and sent their daughter Jackie—and later her sister Lee—to the best private schools.

Meanwhile, a twenty-five-year-old Aristotle Onassis,

who would one day be wound inextricably in the lives of both Bouvier girls, was looking past the pile of his first million dollars towards the next ten or a hundred million.

"After you make your first million it is just a matter of expansion," Onassis has always maintained. "But a slight mistake might break your neck."

Onassis has made few mistakes in his lifetime. He made none at the beginning when he bought the freighter fleet. Aware as he is of the perils imposed by profitless operations, he likes to tell how he laid up four of the freighters in port and sent only two out to ply the seas of trade until business picked up.

However, Cousin Konialides has said that the "syndicate" quickly sold four of the tankers at a substantial profit and kept only two which it put in operation.

For the next three years the two ships broke even, but gradually the panic receded, freight and ship values improved, and Onassis began adding to the fleet.

His ideas were quite elementary, but still they marked a radical departure from the preconceived notions of the established shipping moguls. And the innovations had a profound effect upon the shipping industry.

Before Aristotle came along, Greeks in shipping kept the business a close-to-the-vest family affair. Owners were cautious, thrifty men who shied away from mortgages and never sought publicity. They were content with smaller orthodox ships and modest profits, and only in time of need resorted to financing

—and that was done by traditional, conservative methods.

They were so reactionary that they rarely built their own ships and almost never bothered with oil tankers, for they were regarded as risky business because of the constantly fluctuating oil freight rates.

Much of the world's shipping is said to thrive on crisis—famines, earthquakes, strikes, revolutions, wars. The bulk carriers and tankers are pressed into service to bring relief with food, clothing, other supplies, iron ore, steel, and oil.

No person on earth, not even Aristotle Socrates Onassis, could have known back then in 1931 that shipping one day in the not-too-distant future would enter its golden age, an era that would endure virtually uninterruptedly for more than three decades, right to this day, thanks to such calamities or economic crises as the Ethiopian War, the Spanish Civil War, World War II, the Marshall Plan, the Korean War, the Indochina War, the Suez situation, and Vietnam, among many others.

Yet Onassis seems always to have had an uncanny sixth sense in making the right moves—at the right time.

In 1935 he decided to enter the promising oil tanker trade, and that was one of his greatest strokes of business acumen. His instinct for the future course of world events told him oil would be the most important commodity, and that the sea-lanes were the only link between producer and user.

That same year he went to Sweden and ordered construction of what was then considered a mammoth

oil tanker, the 15,500-ton *Ariston* (the name means "best" in Greek). The *Ariston* was delivered to Onassis in 1938, the first oil tanker ordered and owned by a Greek.

In that same year, he had two other tankers of similar tonnage under construction in Sweden, the *Aristophanes* and the *Buenos Aires*.

Onassis also likes to tell the story to his cronies of how he "screwed" the Greek government. It happened during 1934 when one of his ships was detained in Rotterdam on orders of the Greek consul there until the ship's assistant cook, a Greek, who had taken sick, was replaced by another Greek crewman. The trouble was, of course, that it would take days for the sailor to get there from Greece.

Onassis, stopping in London at the time, was enraged when he heard what was happening. He phoned the consul and asked him to meet him aboard the ship the next day. When the envoy arrived, he was handed a long slender object covered with wrapping paper and tied with a ribbon.

It was the ship's Greek flag.

"Here, *effendi*," Onassis said, using the Turkish salutation that means friend, but is regarded by mainland Greeks as offensive. "Take your flag. You are now a guest aboard a Panamanian ship."

Onassis hauled down the Greek flag on his entire fleet and ran up Panama's, the flag of convenience which enabled him to evade payment of taxes and operate with fewer restrictions.

Panama and Liberia became two of his main flags-

of-convenience countries where the Greek shipping magnate registered his vessels.

No land figured so prominently in the plans of Onassis—as well as those of other Greek shipping giants like Stavros Niarchos and Stavros Livanos, all of whom, incidentally, would in time become related through marriages—as the Republic of Panama. Principally because of these men, Panama soon maintained the fourth largest merchant fleet on earth.

One might be inclined to believe up to this point that Aristotle Onassis was all business and no play, but nothing could be further from the truth. Aristotle liked opera, theater, museums—but most especially girls.

If the chroniclers of his early years have been faithful even to part of the truth, he was indeed a lady's man.

As a young man, Onassis did not appear as homely as he may seem today. His heavy-lidded eyes were not weighted with the bulky pouches that hang from them now; his face was unwrinkled, unlined, and unencumbered by the sinister cast which aging has advanced. His nose, which a writer once described as jutting out "like the prow of a schooner," was large even then, but somehow on a younger Aristotle Onassis it seemed much more homologous. In stature he is relatively short—five feet five inches tall—but in youth his figure was much trimmer.

Add to this youthful millionaire the even more essential ingredients that win women's hearts—great charm, absorbing interest in the other person, and that aggregate of those special gifts of mind and char-

acter that the Greeks call *charisma*—and it might explain why the girls went for Onassis even before he made his first million.

His first dates were with girls who worked in the phone company, and some of them he continued to escort even after he started up the ladder to riches.

The first public note that historians have made of an Onassis escapade with a damosel came nearly two decades ago, when they detailed in lurid prose his relations with Ingeborg Dedichen, the estranged wife of a Danish gentleman whose family published *Politiken*, Denmark's leading daily.

In his treatise on Onassis, Willi Frischauer tells of how it really was, which wasn't at all the way the newspapers called the shots after they exhumed the story out of the past as sidebar material for the main account of his much-publicized joust with Norwegian whaling interests in the late forties.

Aristotle, says the author, met Ingeborg aboard the Italian liner *Augustus* while sailing from Buenos Aires to the Continent. Ingeborg was despondent because her marriage was on the rocks, she was penniless, and her heart was broken.

"They sat up deep into the night talking . . . Onassis was at great pains to comfort her. He was a good listener and, as a raconteur, once he emerged from his natural reticence, no mean companion. Besides, it was no hardship to team up with such a beautiful woman and his psychological therapy of understanding and compassion worked wonders."

The therapy Aristotle administered to Ingeborg prompted her to "set up house in Paris, and their

friendship continued." Years later, when Ingeborg's name was dragged into the headlines as Onassis' one-time paramour, some stories purported that the Greek shipping tycoon owed his rise to success to her father, Thor Dahl, so-called patriarch of Norwegian whaling; that once the old man opened the doors of Scandinavian shipping to his prospective son-in-law and the young man had what he wanted, Onassis jilted his daughter.

Aristotle's defense is certainly valid. He says that Ingeborg's father died long before she met this courtly, compassionate Greek.

Although their affair ended long ago, Onassis is still supposed to be "on the best of terms with her, and is believed to be supporting her generously to this day."

As Onassis' fortunes rose in Buenos Aires, he became more and more a man of the world, traveling to London, Paris, Stockholm, New York, and San Francisco with increasing frequency to transact business and negotiate deals that inevitably helped pyramid his holdings into an empire.

Onassis was in London on September 3, 1939, when Hitler's *Wehrmacht* invaded Poland and plunged the world into war. Three of his prized vessels, the *Ariston, Aristophanes,* and *Buenos Aires,* were bottled up in the Baltic and were out of action for the duration. But Onassis had many other ships, American-based and flying the Panamanian flag. He sailed for New York and promptly put that fleet at the disposal of the Allies.

Other Greek shipowners who took refuge in New York City after their neutral homeland was invaded

first by the Italians and then the Germans also offered their ships to the Allied merchant fleets.

Of course, many of their ships were so decrepit that they were ideal torpedo bait. But until they sank, they carried priceless cargoes across the U-boat infested Atlantic.

They were undoubtedly useful to the Allied war effort, but they were even more useful to the ambitions of their owners. War-zone freight rates were high and profits were huge. Moreover, when one of these antiques sank, the insurance money often paid for a new ship. It was like expansion capital.

And for some of the tycoons it was always possible to protect their new and better vessels by chartering them to neutral nations like Switzerland, or having them safely interned in the ports of neutral Sweden.

Onassis is proud of one fact regarding his own fleet which plied the high seas during the war: he did not lose a single ship and hence did not profit on compensation paid other shippers whose vessels were lost while in government service.

He is also proud of the fact that he came out of the war at the age of forty with a shipping empire worth thirty million dollars. And there's more to that than meets the eye.

Chapter 4

THE FBI AND ONASSIS

On July 16, 1942, Rear Admiral Emory S. Land, administrator of the War Shipping Administration in Washington, D. C. received the following letter, marked "personal and confidential" and delivered by special messenger:

"My dear Admiral:

"Information has been received from a confidential source that Mr. Aristotle Onassis, who is reportedly part owner of the tankers "Calliroy" and "Antipe," was scheduled to depart for the United States on Thursday, June 18, 1942, by Pan American clipper from Buenos Aires, Argentina. According to the informant, the purpose of Onassis' visit is to continue the negotiations for the sale of these two tankers to the War Shipping Administration.

"The informant advised there is no information available indicating Mr. Onassis has any other motive for making a trip to the United

States, but it was reported he has expressed sentiments inimical to the United States war effort, and that his activities and movements while in the United States should be carefully scrutinized."

The letter was signed by John Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

What Hoover had in mind about Onassis' activities that purportedly were "inimical to the United States war effort" is difficult to say, because the FBI chief did not reveal any more to Admiral Land than what was in the letter.

The letter was filed by the War Shipping Administration head after it was marked "no reply."

As a Greek born in Turkey and an Argentine citizen, which Onassis had been now for many years, he owed no loyalty to the United States war effort.

But loyalty wasn't the issue. The government had other wartime suspicions of Onassis—but nobody ever proved that he had evaded or broken the law.

The Foreign Funds Control Division of the Treasury Department is known to have kept a wary eye on Onassis' activities, as did the WSA after receiving Hoover's alert. His operations were given the closest possible examination, but very few areas of questionable wrongdoing were uncovered.

Yet it was obvious that Onassis' methods were not always as aboveboard as the United States would have liked them to be.

He was a man in a hurry. He had sensed that the war was his great opportunity to leap ahead in the

race for merchant fleet supremacy with his other chief Greek rivals, the two Stavros, Livanos and Niarchos. By now Onassis had acquired a fierce pride and a determination to outdo these veteran giants of merchant shipping.

In retrospect, his efforts often had comical overtones, but there was nothing funny about them at the time.

It was wartime, and the ship that could keep afloat could be kept busy. But under wartime regulations, transfer of title to a ship had to be approved by the government.

Onassis had a wary eye out for any vessel he could acquire for his burgeoning fleet; he wasn't looking for quality now, but sheer quantity. Anything that floated could make a buck for its owner with the astronomic freight rates the Allies were paying.

Or, if he had a couple of freighters that he thought the War Shipping Administration could use, he'd unload—just so long as he could make a fast and handsome profit. And during the war the WSA was paying top dollar for every ton it took on.

On one occasion Onassis located a likely addition, an ancient tub that had been immobilized by a strike against a West Coast lumber company. When Onassis put in his bid for its purchase, the government sent an inspector to see if this was a ship for which Uncle Sam might have any use.

After looking over the vintage vessel, the inspector reported: "I cannot imagine an emergency so bad that the government would want to use this ship."

But Onassis bought it.

Perhaps because of Hoover's alert, the WSA finally sensed some hanky-panky and moved in on one of Onassis' deals. It concerned two tankers for which the Greek international trader was responsible as "attorney in fact."

The government was tipped to the possibility that these floating oil carriers might be transferred to new ownership and that their services might be lost to the United States. The government was well aware that some of the better merchant ships were being steered into neutral waters to protect them from fatal encounters with U-boats in the busy Atlantic shipping lanes that were the Allies' lifelines.

The WSA issued an ultimatum that Onassis "immediately" charter the tankers to the United States and set a deadline. The offer was accepted with a bare two minutes to spare!

There were numerous other examples of Onassis' high-handed methods which indicated quite clearly that he felt no allegiance—and certainly no moral obligation—to the United States. If he had any feelings for this nation they obviously did not penetrate to his pocketbook.

To Onassis, the United States was just another country—a land of opportunity that could be used to enhance his shipping empire.

One of the gimmicks that enabled this Greek manipulator to reap profits as huge as he admits he made during the war was his almost taxless position here, thanks to the Panamanian flag-of-convenience status his fleet enjoyed.

This escape hatch was as much the creation of the

United States as it was Onassis' baby. Just before America's entry into World War II, this country allowed its ships to register in Panama so they could carry cargo to our friends in Europe. Otherwise, under the Neutrality Act, American vessels could not enter the war zone.

After the war, however, Washington came to feel much the same about Panamanian ship registrations as Frankenstein felt about his monster.

To the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the various seamen's unions, Panama was a happy refuge from American income taxes and the higher operating costs of American flagships.

Nothing could have been cheaper than Panamanian registry. It merely required an arrangement whereby a citizen of Panama held the shipping firm's power of attorney, a payment of one dollar per ton as initial registration fee, and a ten-cent-per-ton yearly tax.

Onassis found he could set up a shipping corporation in Panama for as little as five hundred dollars.

If the United States was now anxious to avoid losing flagships to foreign countries where cheaper flags of convenience could be flown by the carriers, it was not apparent even in the first years after World War II. Government officials were still encouraging the practice.

They even urged it—upon Aristotle Socrates Onassis.

It was 1947. Onassis was spending a weekend in the company of an "old friend," former Secretary of State Edward Stettinius.

"Stettinius was in a sentimental mood," Onassis

said. "He told me that coming back from the Yalta Conference he had stopped off in Liberia and found that he was the first American statesman ever to visit the country.

"He'd promised to do something for their economy.

" 'You have an enterprising mind,' he told me, 'why don't you do some thinking and see how I can help the Liberians make an honest dollar?'

"The next time I saw him I said, 'Look here, all our eggs are in the Panamanian basket. Why don't we tell our Liberian friends to make a basket so that we can transfer some of our eggs there?'

"Well, that's what we did. We copied the entire Panamanian shipping legislation, with a good many improvements. Then Stettinius sent Admiral (William) Bull Halsey to the head of the marine department at Standard Oil, an Annapolis man who thought Halsey was a demi-god.

" 'Put some goddam ships under this goddam flag,' Halsey said, and that was that."

In a few short years, Stettinius, Halsey, and Onassis, together with a former Congressman, would become the targets of a Senate investigating committee looking into a number of incredible post-war deals involving the sale of Maritime Commission ships—transactions involving millions of dollars.

But that probe was still a long way off back around Christmastime of 1946. Indeed, Onassis had not even yet entered the conspiracy to defraud the United States government of those multimillion dollars' worth of surplus ships.

Another matter was ringing in his mind now.

It was the nearing clang of wedding bells.

Chapter 5

MARRIAGE TO TINA

Aristotle Onassis and Stavros Livanos were arch enemies on the high seas where they competed for the world's shipping trade.

But when they were bottled up during the war in New York City, they managed to tolerate each other at social gatherings. Very often Stavros would invite Aristotle up to his suite in the posh Plaza Hotel with other Greek shipping bigwigs who had taken refuge in the city. Although their talk much of the time was of business, they often played cards for relaxation.

One spring evening in 1943, at just such a gathering, Mrs. Livanos happened to come into the living room where her husband was entertaining his friends. She was accompanied by her two pretty daughters, Athina, fourteen, and Eugenie, fifteen.

Although Onassis was approaching thirty-seven, his eye caught the younger girl, a sweet thing with honey-blonde hair, large twinkling hazel eyes, and a smile that seemed to dissolve his calloused heart.

The other Greek shipping men took note of Onassis' intense interest.

When the girls left the room, the older men teased Aristotle.

"Why don't you marry one of them?" one of the louder of the group quipped.

Onassis, still a bachelor, smiled.

"Who wants to marry them and inherit this monster for a father-in-law," he taunted, nodding toward Livanos. "He would drive me to drown myself in the ocean."

But as time passed, the issue began to take on more serious overtones. Livanos would mention marriage to Onassis as often as they got together.

"It is time for you to settle down, Ari," he would say. "Why don't you marry . . . ?"

Invariably Onassis would reply: "Teenage girls are too young for me."

Livanos kept praising the wedded state and cited his own happy marriage with a woman twenty years his junior.

The exchange between the two men carried in this vein for three years. Finally, in 1946, after Athina—nicknamed "Tina"—had completed her education (she had attended Rosemary Hall in Connecticut and Miss Hewitt's Classes), Onassis finally reconsidered.

Tina, London-born but a naturalized U. S. citizen, was now going on seventeen and was fast approaching the flower of womanhood.

On one of his visits to the Plaza in early 1946, Aristotle saw Tina for the first time since she had left for school six months before. He was amazed at how she had grown up.

The next day he sent her father a note: "What would you do if I asked for Tina's hand?"

Livanos was furious. In Greece, the oldest daughter traditionally marries first, and so on down the line. He told Onassis that he hadn't been trying all these years to talk him into marrying Tina.

"I have been hinting that you marry Eugenie," Livanos almost screamed in rage. "She is the older and she must get married first. I will not allow you to marry Tina."

Aristotle narrowed his gaze at the father and reared back. "The trouble with you, *patrioti* (countryman), is that you regard your daughters like your ships. You try to get rid of the older ones first. Well, you are not going to make me a party to any such deal. This thinking of yours is good for the old country, but not for America."

All that summer Livanos would not talk to Onassis. He sent no more invitations for get-togethers in his Plaza suite and ignored Aristotle when they passed each other on the street. Onassis, who lived in a sumptuous eighteenth-floor apartment nearby (Greta Garbo was one of the tenants in the building), matched his prospective father-in-law's stubbornness. He kept sending Livanos notes almost daily for Tina's hand.

Onassis' perseverance finally paid off. Livanos yielded.

The wedding took place the Sunday after Christmas, December 28, 1946, in New York City's Greek Orthodox Cathedral.

The event hardly drew a ripple in the city's seven

daily newspapers. Only the New York *Herald Tribune* and the New York *Times* paid any attention on their social pages. Onassis and Livanos were behemoths in the shipping world but they had no rating in society.

The *Times* gave the story this treatment:

"Miss Athina Livanos, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Stavros George Livanos of the Plaza, this city, and London, England, was married yesterday afternoon in the Greek Orthodox Cathedral to Aristo S. Onassis of this city and Oyster Bay, L. I., son of the late Socrates Onassis and the late Mrs. Penelope Onassis, of Athens, Greece. The ceremony was performed by Archbishop Athenagoras with the assistance of Father Euthimion (or, correctly, the Rev. Basil Efthimiou).

"The bride had a sister, Miss Eugenie Livanos, as maid of honor. Bridesmaids were the Misses Nancy Harris, Andree Maitland, Janet Bethel and Joan Durand, all of this city. Beatrice Ammidown and Cornelia Embiricos were flower girls. Andre Embiricos was best man. A reception was given in the Terrace Room of the Plaza."

Much more generous space was given the wedding in two other New York dailies whose readership was rather limited. They were the *Atlantis* and the *Herald*, both Greek-language newspapers.

A priest of the Greek Orthodox Church in New York recalls Onassis' marriage to Tina as "one of the most splendrous weddings I have ever seen.

"The importance of the wedding was not reflected alone by the presence of Archbishop Athenagoras (now the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church

throughout the world, whose base is in Istanbul), but by the large gathering of notables in the Greek community who filled the cathedral.

"Yet the overpowering force which everyone could feel that day was unmistakably that of Onassis. I would say that only God exceeded his dominance over the ceremony."

Weeks before the wedding had been held, wild speculation circulated among the giants of Greek shipping that the impending union of Aristotle and Tina might lead to a merger of the Onassis-Livanos business interests into the world's mightiest merchant fleet.

In the city's Greek coffee houses, speculation was rampant that a monopoly was in the making which would spread its tentacles to every port around the globe and choke off the competition of other Greek fleet owners.

But the fears were groundless. Neither Onassis nor Livanos had any such plans. Nor did Livanos bestow upon his daughter a huge dowry, as one chronicler cited—two Liberty ships worth one million dollars. Or one Liberty ship, worth $500,000, as another writer had indicated.

Livanos knew better than to give the newlyweds the one possession he least wanted to part with.

By now Onassis' fleet was fast exceeding the tonnage and numbers of ships Livanos had afloat. Adding to Livanos' woes, yet another Greek was breathing hard on his neck in the race for world supremacy in merchant shipping.

He was Stavros Niarchos.

And if the Greek shipping interests were wondering what Aristotle's and Tina's marriage might do to them if the Onassis Livanos fleets merged, then they had still more to worry about a year later when the announcement was made that Niarchos would marry Livanos' other daughter, Eugenie.

The wedding was performed in the same Greek Orthodox Cathedral, with the same Archbishop Athenagoras performing the ceremony. And it was as resplendent as the rite in 1946 that united Ari and Tina as man and wife.

If anything, Niarchos' marriage to Eugenie triggered what was to become a fierce, almost obsessive competition between Livanos' two headstrong sons-in-law that would endure right to the present.

Oddly enough in Greece, brothers-in-law are supposed to be as close as blood brothers. Instead, these two men, Onassis and Niarchos, developed an enmity of Homeric proportions that impelled both to spend all their waking hours trying to dope out ways to cut each other's throats.

In time, the rivalry would reach such ridiculous extremes that Livanos was to comment, "My daughters married a couple of children."

After the wedding, Onassis took his bride on a leisurely months-long honeymoon to Florida, then to Buenos Aires to show her the scenes of his humble beginnings. While there, they met Spiros Skouras, whom Onassis had known since his visits to Hollywood some years before.

During one of their tête-à-têtes, Onassis proposi-

tioned Skouras: "Spiro, what do you say, do you want to sell 20th Century-Fox?"

Skouras looked at Onassis with amazement. As glib and swift on the uptake as any of his contemporaries in the upper echelons of American industry, Skouras smiled and said, "I was just going to ask you if you wanted to put your fleet up for collateral for 5 per cent stock in my company."

Ostensibly, Onassis' holdings were far more extensive than the total worth of the mammoth movie company, but Skouras had no intention of giving up his majority control in Fox to his brassy countryman.

On their return to the States, Aristotle brought Tina to his mansion in Oyster Bay on Long Island, a home he had acquired some time before. In fact, Tina had been out to the house during the previous summer, after graduating from Miss Hewitt's Classes. She didn't have far to travel to see her father, for Onassis had persuaded Livanos to buy a place nearby so they could be "neighbors."

Aristotle gave Tina a gold bracelet fashioned with coins of Alexander the Great, engraved with "Saturday, 7 p. m. 17 April 1943—T. I. L. Y." The date commemorated his first meeting with Tina, in her parents' suite at the Plaza. The initials stood for "Tina, I love you."

In time, Aristotle Socrates Onassis would issue such mementos to other women in his life.

Among them would be "M. I. L. Y.," which would result in the breakup of two marriages, and another, "J. I. L. Y.," which would set the world on its ear.

Chapter 6

WHEELER DEALER

In his vague primeval beginnings as a telephone operator, Aristotle Socrates Onassis could not have foreseen in his wildest dreams the day when he would reside in fashionable Oyster Bay and have neighbors like Edward R. Stettinius, the former Secretary of State of the United States.

But now, as a multimillionaire shipping tycoon, Onassis could invite Stettinius to his house and Stettinius could invite Onassis to his, and in fact they frequently exchanged visits.

Their talk more often than not was about the science of statecraft and the science of shipping. Inevitably the conversations led Stettinius to discuss the Liberian "problem" and to ask Onassis if he had any ideas on how that country could make an "honest dollar."

Onassis' brilliant thought to establish a Liberian flag of convenience was not entirely motivated by any Olympic compassion for the first nation of blacks in full independence. Aristotle sensed a wonderful op-

portunity to establish another lucrative base of operations for his fleet.

Onassis presented a three-point program to Stettinius:

1. Persuade American financial institutions to accept Liberia's liberal mortgage laws.

2. Finance Liberian flagships on the same terms extended to vessels flying Panama's colors.

3. Induce American oil companies to enter into contracts with shippers whose tankers fly the Liberian flag.

Onassis told Stettinius that the success or failure of this scheme depended on salesmanship. Before anything else could be done, a large oil company must be found which would be willing to consign some of its business to Liberian flagships.

Onassis suggested that Bush Howard, director of sea transportation at Standard Oil of New Jersey, was the man to see.

Stettinius went to Admiral Halsey, who consented to act as go-between with Bush. Once a war hero like Halsey, the commander of the Third Fleet in the Pacific who blew the Japanese navy into oblivion, went to Bush, himself an Annapolis graduate, the deal was swung. This was the famous meeting referred to earlier, at which, as Onassis himself said, all Halsey had to tell Bush was, "Put some goddam ships under this goddam flag . . ."

And that was that.

Selling American financial institutions on the idea of accepting Liberia's mortgage terms was no sweat after mighty Standard Oil's commitment was exhib-

ited. The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company was the first to consent to put its money on the line, and was followed quickly by the First National Bank of New York, the Chase National Bank, and sundry other financial titans.

No sooner was Liberia installed in its new role in world shipping than Onassis felt a swift current of air surge past him. It was stirred up by Stavros Niarchos in his haste to register part of his fleet under the new flag of convenience.

He had been ten Onassis to the punch!

So fierce was the competition between these two colossi of the nautical realm that it soon began spilling over into rivalry in their private and personal lives.

When Onassis bought a fashionable four-story apartment at 16 Sutton Square in Manhattan and spent some $500,000 for renovations and furnishings, Niarchos—he had already bought a home at Lloyds Neck, neighboring Oyster Bay—moved into a top-floor triplex on Sutton Place, then bought the whole sixteen-story building.

This was only the start. It was still only a rivalry between the two men; hatred would come later. Now they were still on speaking terms, and when Onassis detected that there was easy money to be made from the purchase of surplus Liberty ships, he saw great possibilities in Niarchos as a partner—of convenience.

Onassis had tried to buy some fifty surplus ships worth $75,000,000, but was ruled out by the United States Merchant Marine Act of 1916 which restricted

purchase of American ships to U. S. citizens or *firms in which U. S. citizens held controlling interest.*

Well, Onassis told himself, why couldn't he find some upstanding U. S. citizens who might be willing to associate themselves in such a potentially profitable venture? He'd be willing to sacrifice a stake in the whole pie; he'd line up Niarchos and maybe a dozen other Greek shipping owners, have them contribute into the kitty for a minority 49 per cent chunk of the corporation, while their American friends held 51 per cent of the stock.

At least that's the way it would look on paper.

The way Onassis had it plotted out, his American partners could either be rich or poor. It didn't matter, because Onassis and his rich Greek friends were willing to advance the American corporation the down payment for each ship—25 per cent of the purchase price, with the balance payable to the government in sixteen annual installments at 3 per cent interest.

Once the combine got its hands on the ships, the American majority in the corporation would give the foreign minority group in the same corporation a secure title to the *use of the vessels.*

In turn, the foreign group, through a neat ten-year charter arrangement, would kick into the corporation the necessary funds for operating expenses of those vessels, such as crews' wages, insurance, repairs—and a "reasonable profit."

After ten years, the ships, or what's known as their "residual value," would revert to the corporation.

In short, Onassis, Niarchos, and their other Greek cronies could have the use of the corporation's ships

to ply the seas of the world trade markets and take in the astronomical profits these vessels would command in the inflated post-war economy.

Now the question was, what American citizens could Onassis and his seafaring countrymen recruit as front men?

They didn't have to search far nor wide. They found the following coterie of anxious American nationals, all of them prestigious names on the national landscape, though total strangers to the sea: Edward Stettinius, the man who "liberated" Liberia from economic disaster; Joseph E. Casey, former Democratic Congressman from Massachusetts; and Brigadier General J. K. Holmes.

Stettinius, Casey, and Holmes couldn't believe their ears when they were told they were going to be let in on the ground floor of a multimillion dollar shipping deal—and all they had to do was put up a piddling one thousand dollars capital and form the corporation!

There have been bigger deals and more incredible pacts between business partners in the history of shipping, but few, if any, could likely match the barefaced brassiness brought to this contractual affiliation by its visionary.

Perhaps men like Casey, Stettinius, and Holmes were not attracted so much by the lure of the dollar, but by the salesmanship of this son of the sea. Randolph Churchill, the well-known British writer and son of Sir Winston, once talked about Onassis' tremendous gift of gab:

"His conversation is always racy. Though his

choice of words in English is sometimes slightly off-center, his sense of the balance of a spoken sentence is uncannily acute. He is a born orator with a poetic sense and can build up a list of adjectives in ascending order of emphasis and weight which are as perfect as a phrase of music.

"Just as his listener is caught by the spell, he will suddenly bring the whole edifice tumbling down by a deliberate piece of comic pathos. He will burst into laughter at the very moment when almost any other man would be exploding into passion. Sometimes he changes from a gentle whisper to a deafening bellow between words.

"Describing an interview with some commercial rivals, he will say:

" 'I said to them (very quietly and slowly): Gentlemen (very loudly), you sons-of-bachelors, you are trying to ruin me.' "

In time, those words would be spoken again by Onassis in connection with the surplus ship deal. But they would not be directed to his associates—they would be spoken to Uncle Sam's legal emissaries.

But that turn of events was still a number of years away. For now, Aristotle Socrates Onassis had another much more urgent matter to contend with. Tina had entered New York's Harkness Pavilion. She was going to have a baby.

This happy event came at the end of April, 1948, when the wife of one of the world's richest men gave birth to a handsome, healthy heir to her husband's fortune. He was named Alexander.

Elsewhere at this time, another birth of significance

was occurring in the Onassis family - the family of ships, that is. Down at the Sparrows Point shipyards of the Bethlehem Steel Co., workers were welding the last pieces of steel on Onassis' first American-built tanker, an 18,000-ton behemoth which was to be named *Olympic Games.*

This proud ship had hardly slid down the ways before another 18,000-tonner, the *World Peace,* was launched by Stavros Niarchos.

Naturally, the shipping fraternity wondered if these two titans of the seaways weren't engaged in a race for supremacy.

The answer was clear when shortly thereafter Onassis floated a 28,300-ton tanker, the world's largest, and before many months Niarchos launched one of his own—with the identical tonnage.

It was obvious the two men were racing to acquire the largest tanker fleet in the world by building the world's biggest tankers.

Yet people who knew both Onassis and Niarchos insisted they would never have carried on such activities if they weren't profitable. For example, they may each have wanted distinction of owning the biggest tanker—and may still do—but the basic motivation was that supertankers are more economical to operate than small ones.

At times both men have been asked to comment about the other's business acumen.

Onassis once said of Niarchos: "Mr. Niarchos has his own ideas about fair competition. I have mine. I meet Mr. Niarchos socially, but business is a different thing."

Niarchos then parried with this evaluation of Onassis: "He is a very intelligent, entertaining man. Great fun to be with. But it's only natural we should not see eye to eye always. Actually it is a good thing, a healthy thing, for everybody concerned, that we should be competitors and not work as one."

Yet the rivalry has seemed to go further afield.

At the time they offered these cross-viewpoints of each other, both Onassis and Niarchos were bidding to build shipyards and drydocks in Greece and both were seeking control of the Greek airlines.

Eventually, Niarchos invested eight million dollars in a shipyard on the island of Salamis to boost the Greek economy, but Onassis won the big plum—the skies. The Greek government gave him a long-term contract to operate internal air communications on a monopoly basis. He quickly poured $30,000,000 into the state airline, which he incorporated as Olympic Airways.

The rivalry even extends to personal and private possessions, such as yachts.

When Niarchos bought the yacht *Creole*, an 80-ton three-masted sailing vessel which is considered one of the most beautiful in the world, Onassis went to a shipyard in Germany and drew up plans for the fantastically luxurious 325-foot-long *Christina*, a $3,000,000 palace in a hull.

Perhaps the *Christina*, among all his incalculable possessions, has influenced Aristotle Onassis' life the most. The *Christina*, incidentally, was named after his daughter, who was born in mid-December, 1950, in New York.

It was after he acquired this magnificent ship that Onassis was gripped by a compulsion to seek out the famous and take them on cruises on the waters of the Ionian, Adriatic, and Mediterranean Seas, more often than not without Tina and the children.

Tina, of course, could never fault her husband as a provider—but there came a time when she did not like being left alone as often and as unexpectedly as Aristotle had a habit of doing.

Tina was extremely sensitive about her husband's absences. She also had a curious attitude about the age difference between them, which prompted her to build up a circle of young friends in New York and St. Moritz. Sometimes she would refer to her husband as "the old one."

He, in turn, referred to Tina, Alexander, and Christina as "my three children."

But they were still a family then.

Perhaps not the happiest of families—but certainly one of the world's richest.

Chapter 7

MONTE CARLO— A MERE BAGATELLE

UNTIL EARLY 1953, the public at large had never realized that the clan which operates ships out of such obscure countries as Panama, Liberia, and Honduras, and which holds citizenship wherever it seems convenient and likewise profitable, was rival in fortune—if not in good works—to the Rockefeller and Ford families.

But suddenly Aristotle Socrates Onassis unwittingly allowed the curtain to part on this heretofore well-hidden facet of his financial structure when the newspapers discovered he had taken over the Casino at Monte Carlo, in the postage-stamp principality of Monaco.

It was only then that the man in the street came to hear of this implausible magnate with the improbable forenames.

The story made page one in many newspapers around the world, including the New York *Times*, whose account started with this pitch:

"Aristotle Socrates Onassis, youthful, handsome proprietor of ninety-one ships, offices in six countries and homes in Sutton Place, Paris, Antibes, Athens, and Montevideo, has added a new and glamorous property to his holdings, but for an unglamorous purpose.

"After a year and a half of patient purchasing from 2,000 stockholders, he has acquired control of the famous casino and resort buildings in Monte Carlo . . ."

For the few insiders who knew all about Onassis' great wealth, as well as the wealth of other Greek shipowners, the news was ironic since the purchase of Monte Carlo was, financially speaking, a mere bagatelle.

But when Onassis' "unglamorous" motive in buying the casino was explained, his friends, especially, understood.

"Two years ago, I tried to rent one of the buildings, the old Winter Sporting Club, to use as an office building," Onassis said. "They wouldn't rent it to me, although it has been closed for twenty years. So I did something else."

His "something else" was to buy Monte Carlo.

The purchase of controlling stock in the Société des Bains de Mer et Cercles des Etrangers—Sea-Bathing Society and Foreigners' Circle—as the Monte Carlo complex is known, involved a cash outlay of only a paltry one million dollars.

The public readily agreed that for a man of Onassis' position of wealth, a million was indeed paltry. At that very time, for example, he was spend-

ing some $130,000,000 to build twenty-three big new oil tankers, including a 45,000-ton giant which was the largest ever constructed up to that time.

The purchase of Monaco was typical of Onassis' talent for high-powered manipulation. It was just another cut and dried deal, but particularly satisfying because he had circumvented opposition and eliminated his opponents.

He had gotten the office space he had wanted to which he could move about a hundred of his staff from other parts of the world. However, he was to get more than he had bargained for.

In addition to the Casino, the Winter Sporting Club, three de luxe hotels, a theater, and other assorted properties which made up the assets of the SBM, he got perhaps the biggest dividend of all—he was, overnight, a celebrity.

Everyone was asking, how did Onassis pull the deal?

Without hesitation, he explained.

After his request to rent office space was turned down by the SBM, Onassis quietly picked up SBM shares on the Paris stock market through friends and through the forty-nine Panamanian companies he controls. He built up a majority interest of about 51 per cent of the company's million shares, paying four to five dollars a share for some 300,000 of SBM's total one million shares.

To effectively cement the deal and grab control of the SBM in spirit as well as body, Onassis employed a subtle ploy which had worked so well for him in those deals that involved "friends" like former Secretary of State Stettinius and Admiral Halsey.

He made friends with the ruler of Monaco, His Serene Highness Prince Rainier III.

Onassis was well aware that the sovereign of this tiny domain in the south of France (total area: six tenths of a square mile) supported himself wholly on the tithe of the SBM take.

Onassis was also aware that the historic glitter of Monte Carlo was beginning to become somewhat tarnished and that the Casino and SBM were having some trouble making ends meet.

Above all, Onassis knew that the Prince had the final say on any SBM matter, regardless of who had controlling interest in the corporation.

There's no question that Aristotle put the Prince in a position of obligation to him when he "found" a rare bargain in boats for Rainier—a sleek, 135-foot Diesel-powered yacht for which the Monacan sovereign had to pay a modest $117,000.

After eighteen months and under several names, none of his own, Onassis had operating control of SBM. But he also had to have the support of Rainier. **Would he get it?**

The story goes that some months before the Prince availed himself of Aristotle's rare bargain in a boat, he had gotten wind of the Greek shipowner's secret efforts to buy up SBM stock. Rainier sent a trio of the SBM's nine directors out to drum up investors who could inject new blood into the anemic financial structure of the corporation. His Highness had wanted no part of Onassis' money.

But then, after the boat had been delivered to Rainier, he promptly recalled the three SBM directors and rejected out of hand a deal they had made

with four French banks to lend Monte Carlo funds to ease its financial plight.

When the three directors asked for an explanation, he gave them a princely brush-off—and asked for their resignations. They were then replaced by Onassis men.

To Onassis, this high-powered manipulation was nothing unusual. It was just another routine deal, which like most of his other wheelings and dealings had circumvented and/or eliminated opposition.

As Onassis observed: "For one million dollars, I got control of a property with a real-estate value alone of twenty million dollars."

It was only after Onassis had grabbed controlling interest and the ruler's blessings that Rainier learned of the moneyman's plans for Monte Carlo.

Monaco's prosperity traditionally came from its status as a tax haven and gamblers' paradise. But both these lures had been dissipated by changing events.

The smart set of Paris, St. Moritz, and the Riviera —an international society of declining royalty and fraying nobility—no longer went to Monte Carlo. Moreover, gambling had been legalized in France and other European countries.

The clientele scattered. The romance was gone. Whereas in one season in the good old days Monte Carlo could have five kings registered at the same time in the Hotel de Paris, spending their royal fortunes, now the principality was lucky to make bread and butter money from the Sixth Fleet playing the slot machines.

Moreover, the time was not far off when Monaco would even lose its preferred status as a tax haven. The French government was talking about enforcing a corporation tax and an income tax on French residents.

In that bleak situation, Onassis decided Monaco's economy was in line for a change.

"Gambling is a curse and a headache," he observed. "There are better ways to have the feeling of making and losing money. I think real estate would be a much better operation for the economy."

Onassis' idea was to dig up the formal gardens, tear down the hotels, and build skyscrapers which would be rented to the hundreds of corporations which wanted to set up real or dummy headquarters in Monaco to benefit from tax advantages offered there.

But at the beginning, he betrayed no such intention. Everyone thought he had bought into Monte Carlo for the sake of office space—and as a "fun thing." But hobby or business, this turned out to be another Onassis deal that paid off.

The very next year after he took over, the society's books showed a profit for the first time in twenty years.

Rainier was delighted. Now he could proceed with the plan he had in mind to develop tourism and enhance the traditional image of Monaco as a country whose borders are flower beds.

But as time went on and Rainier got wind of Onassis' intentions, the two had a falling out. Onassis dismisses that story as he does other stories concerning feuds with Rainier.

"Like all residents of Monaco, I owed its sovereign prince devotion and loyalty. It's all nonsense that the Prince and I started off as pals and then fell out. Whoever heard of a simple resident of a country being a pal of its sovereign?

"At the beginning, the Prince liked me. I don't say he dislikes me now, but there may be something there. There was so much baloney written that the Prince, even if he knows that it's baloney, could have been irritated by it. He is only human, isn't he?"

Onassis also belittled his purchase of the society's shares as a piddling deal, "as nothing compared to my other interests."

"Say it cost me a million dollars. Why, for heaven's sake, it's the price of a string of horses. I had no big or sinister plans when I bought this. It's sort of a hobby with me, that's all."

That was what he had said back in 1956 when rumors were flying that Rainier and Onassis were at each other's throats. But the Prince, who was greatly disturbed about Aristotle's plans to tear down his beautiful real estate and replace it with "ugly" glass and steel edifices, had no time to devote to the fight then.

A beautiful Hollywood actress, Grace Kelly, had come to Monaco to marry the handsome Prince. The Greek shipping magnate was still on relatively good terms with the monarch, and he and his wife were invited to the glorious wedding reception and wild celebration.

In the months and years that followed, the relationship, however strained between the two men in their

arguments over the future image of Monte Carlo, did not prevent them from socializing. Prince Rainier and Princess Grace were often guests aboard Onassis' fabulous yacht *Christina*, and Ari and Tina were frequently seen visiting the palace of the Monacan ruler.

But a time came in 1967 when Rainier had had his fill of Onassis. He got the backing of his 5,000 subjects for a showdown with this foreign intruder.

"I'm no Nasser," said the Prince, "but if I have to, I'll nationalize the SBM."

He then put into motion his plan to oust Onassis. The Monacan government ordered SBM to float 600,000 new shares, which it immediately bought itself. This at once put Onassis in a minority position.

Then the offer was made: minority shareholders may sell their holdings for the arbitrarily fixed price of seventeen dollars a share.

Onassis' back was to the wall. He was compelled to sell.

On March 18, 1967, he received a check from Barclay's Bank for 39,912,000 francs—about ten million dollars in payment for his 500,489 shares of SBM.

"We lost," Onassis moaned. Then he added with Aristotelian philosophy: "When a government says 'I'm taking over,' there's nothing you can do to stop them. Those shares were worth six or seven times what they paid me."

And what happened in Monaco is what happened elsewhere to Onassis before: governments always gang up on him.

It's enough to make a sympathizer weep for him—all the way to the bank.

Chapter 8

ARISTOTLE INDICTED!

No sooner did Aristotle Onassis become a world celebrity as the man who bought Monte Carlo than he was back in the headlines as another kind of luminary with a far less flattering connotation.

He was called a fraud.

That description came out of a Federal grand jury indictment that was handed up October 13, 1953, after an investigation into Onassis' multimillion dollar surplus ship deals.

The jury indicted the Greek shipping magnate along with former Congressman Casey and seven other individuals, as well as six corporations, for their part in the conspiracy that allegedly defrauded the United States government of $18,000,000 (later the figure was upped to $20,000,000).

The indictment was kept sealed for four months, until February 8, 1954, while the government waited for Onassis to return from Europe to the jurisdiction of the U. S. District Court in the District of Columbia. When the government learned that Aristotle was back

in New York, it prepared to move in with a warrant and arrest him, along with the others accused in the conspiracy.

Somehow, Onassis got wind that he was wanted. Someone from his office phoned the Justice Department and said Aristotle was prepared to come in and talk things over. But the government didn't wait. A marshal was sent to intercept Onassis at one of New York City's poshest restaurants, the Colony, one of the Greek shipowner's favorite spots.

"Nothing like this ever happened before . . . it's the first time gangbusters played this house," remarked a veteran waiter when he learned that the sheriff had come to arrest one of its patrons. "We've never even had a dishwasher arrested for spitting on the sidewalk."

As it was, the marshal did not flash any badge like his Western counterparts. He politely waited for Onassis to finish his lunch in his good time, then walked out of the restaurant with him. They drove downtown to the U. S. Courthouse in Foley Square and arrangements were made there to allow Onassis his freedom until the following Monday, when he would have to surrender himself to the Federal Court in the nation's capital.

When he got to Washington, Onassis went straight to the office of Assistant U. S. Attorney Leo Rover, who explained what was in the indictment. Then Rover summoned a marshal, who placed Onassis under arrest, led him to an office where he was fingerprinted and mugged like a common criminal, then

ushered him into the courtroom of Federal Judge Bolitha J. Laws.

Onassis spoke only two words when he was asked how he pleaded to the indictment: "Not guilty!"

Judge Laws, guided by the U. S. Attorney's recommendation, set $10,000 bail, which was posted immediately. But the court added the stipulation that Onassis was not to leave the country.

The indictment pivoted around the contention that the corporations controlled by Onassis—and fronted by American citizens in a combine popularly known as the "Casey Group"—had obtained the surplus American ships after World War II by misrepresenting that the corporations were owned by United States citizens.

The indictment contained eight counts, which embraced charges that false statements had been made to the government.

Onassis was petrified by this stark development, because for the first time since his early days in Smyrna when the Turks had arrested him, he faced the possibility of going to jail if he were to stand trial and be convicted. By Federal statute, making false statements in connection with business done with the government is punishable by up to five years imprisonment and ten thousand dollars fine, or both—on each count.

Conceivably, Onassis could face forty years in jail if he were to be convicted. Of course the fine, $80,000, would come out of petty cash. That was the least of Aristotle's worries.

Besides Onassis and Casey, the other individuals

THE MARRIAGE OF THE YEAR

From First Lady to Queen of the Jet Set.
What's next?

Members of the Kennedy clan and newsmen flocked to the isle of Skorpios to hear Jackie's plans to wed Onassis.

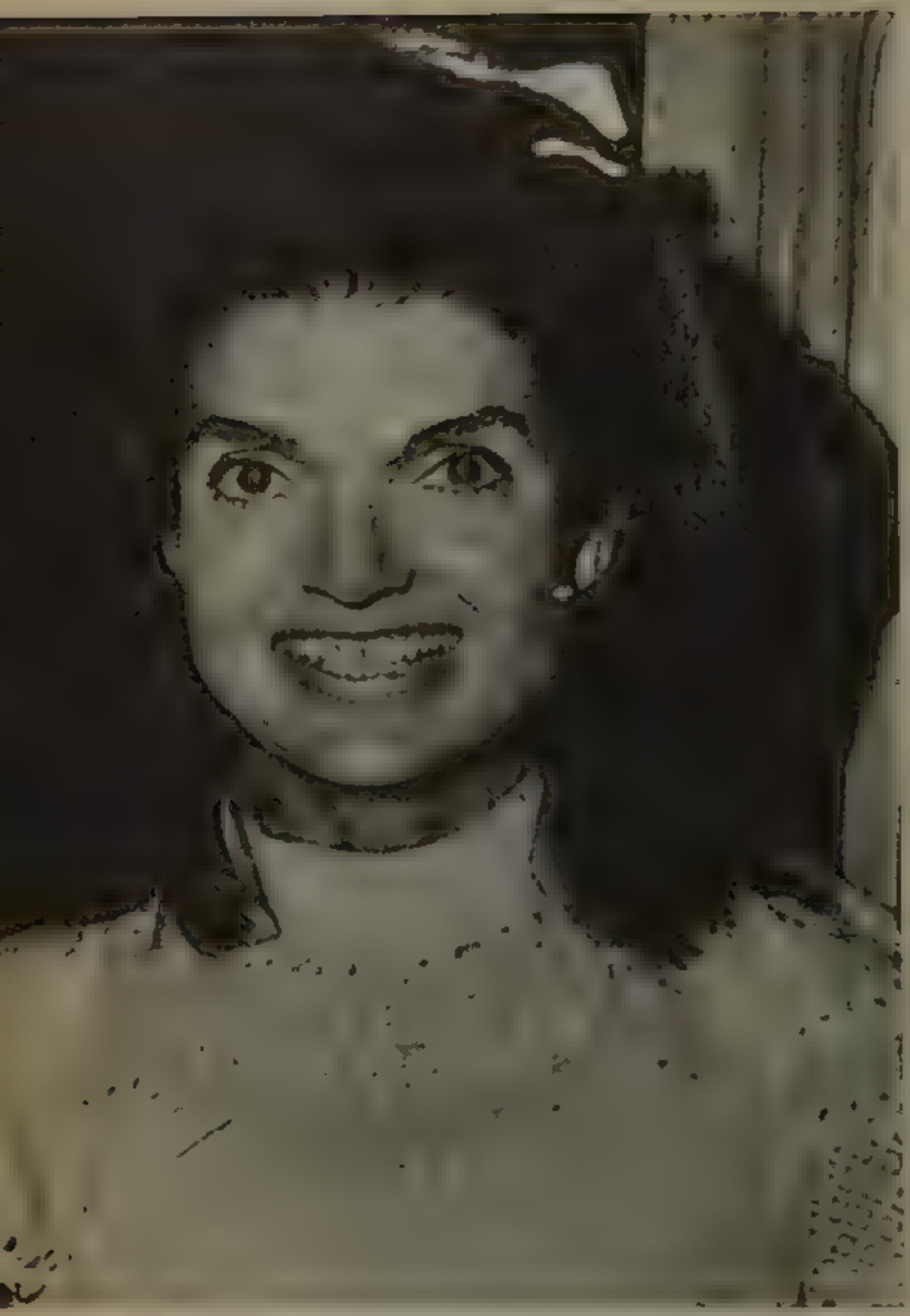
9.

Jackie and her children beam at wedding guests as she and Onassis leave chapel where they were married.

Officially man and wife now, Onassis personally drives Jackie to his yacht.

All aboard for the wedding reception of the year!

After the ceremony, Onassis chats with daughter Christina aboard the yacht named in her honor.



The new Mrs. Onassis smiles her happiness for all the world to see.

Onassis and his first wife, Tina, were happily married when they posed with their children in 1954.

Called a collector of status symbols and stars alike, Onassis takes the sun with Greta Garbo and Gracie Fields.

Not one to resist a beautiful woman, Onassis dines with Elizabeth Taylor at the Lido in Paris in 1964.

From statesman Sir Winston Churchill to international financier J. Paul Getty, Onassis entertained them all.

Onassis was accompanied by world-famous ballerina Margot Fonteyn on a flight to Monte Carlo in 1956.

Onassis flew to Milan to see opera star Maria Callas after she announced the breakup of her marriage.

Princess Lee Radziwill, whose name has also been linked with Onassis, introduced her sister to Ari.

During the happy years of her marriage to John F. Kennedy, Jackie could not have guessed what her future held.

named in the indictment were Joseph H. Rosenbaum and Robert W. Dudley, Washington lawyers; Robert L. Berenson; Nicholas Cokkinis; Charles Augnethaler; Harold O. Becker; and George Cokkinis.

The corporations named were United States Petroleum Carriers, Inc.; Victory Carriers, Inc.; Central American Steamship Agency, Inc.; Sociedad Industrial Maritima Financiera Ariona Panama, S. A.; Sociedad Maritime Miraflores; and Transatlantic Financiera Industrial Panama, S. A.

Perhaps alerted to the danger of suffering a deflated public image just at a time when he had become a "celebrity," Onassis very promptly issued a statement that he had heard while in Europe that there was a sealed indictment against him and had come to the United States voluntarily to learn whether it was true "and if so to clear my name."

He proceeded to explain that he had a 49 per cent interest in the key corporation involved in the ship transactions, United States Petroleum Carriers, Inc., but that the firm was organized by American citizens. He did not go into the finer details of the deal—of how control and use of the ships had reverted after their purchase from the government to the foreign "minority" in the firm.

Instead, Onassis spoke about how the ship purchases were not only approved, but encouraged by U. S. officials. And, after all, Onassis insisted, he was only performing a patriotic service for a country in which he didn't even hold citizenship.

"Thousands of young men were coming back from the war and they were looking for jobs. By buying

these ships and putting them in world sea trade, we were able to provide ready employment to these heroic veterans who had sacrificed in the war."

The indictment was the outgrowth of an intensive Senate inquiry conducted in 1951–1952 into how the government disposed of the many surplus ships it had on hand at the end of World War II. The committee, headed by Senator Clyde R. Hoey (D.-N.C.) centered its attention largely around the activities of former Congressman Casey, who had gone into private law practice in New York City after losing a bid for a Senate seat in Massachusetts.

There was testimony that Casey and a group of prominent public figures had made enormous profits by acquiring ships from the Maritime Commission and reselling them.

Two deals alone in 1947 and 1948 were described as returning $3,200,000 on a $101,000 investment.

Among those named during the Senate inquiry as associates of Casey in some deals were Admiral Halsey and former Secretary of State Stettinius, who by now was dead. Onassis' name had not come out in that inquiry.

Also stemming from the Senate inquiry was one of the big political explosions of President Harry S. Truman's administration.

Truman had drafted Newbold Morris, a New York lawyer and one-time candidate for Mayor, to come to Washington to do a "clean-up" job on the government.

Morris had hardly settled into his job before his name came into the ship inquiry. It developed that

his law firm had represented certain Chinese-Americans in connection with ship purchases. Morris disclaimed any wrongdoing, but the Senate committee was critical of him in its report.

In the upshot, the then Attorney General J. Howard McGrath dismissed Morris. Truman then dropped McGrath from the Cabinet.

The Senate committee finally recommended that the government seek to recover some forty-seven ships that had sailed into the muddy waters of the scandal.

By the time the indictment against Onassis and his alleged buncos came along, most of the ships had been reclaimed by the government.

The committee also recommended that the Justice Department look into possible criminal violation of the Ship-Sales Act and of the tax statutes.

The grand jury inquiry which led to the indictment had been ordered by Attorney General James P. McGranery, successor to McGrath in the Truman administration. But it did not actually get started until after President Dwight D. Eisenhower took office.

If the indictment seemed to miss some of the others who had joined Onassis in his surplus ships deals, it was only because there was another bill of particulars that would be opened a fortnight later.

On February 23, when the indictment was unsealed, these were the others who were hit: Stavros Niarchos, who needs no introduction, and former Congressman Casey again; Julius C. Holmes, former U. S. minister to Great Britain; Mary Dracopoulous, a sister of Niarchos; George N. Emmanuel; Constan-

tine Emmanuel; Ambrose Capparis, George Trypanis, David Dorn, Robert A. Murphy, and Ralph R. Matregano, officers or employees of the North American Shipping & Trading Co. Inc.; Charles Augenthaler and Hugh Reid, partners in Simpson, Spence & Young, New York shipping agents; Edwin J. Maas, former comptroller of North American; George D. McCarthy, of the New York accounting firm of Price, Waterhouse & Co.; E. Stanley Klein, New York financier; Delmont M. White, vice president of the American Pacific Steamship Co.; and Willard Walter, director of American Pacific.

The seven corporations named in the indictment were: The North American Shipping & Trading Co. Inc.; Compania Internacional De Vapores, Panama; Plymouth Tanker Corp., American Pacific Steamship Co., and Delaware Tanker Corp., subsidiaries of North American; Oriental Tanker Corp., a related corporation of North American; and the American Overseas Tanker Corp.

Most of the new defendants were charged with conspiring to violate the law against making false statements to the government.

Some were accused of breaking terms of a purchase contract for five tankers by changing the ownership of the tankers without U. S. government approval.

Undoubtedly thinking of Winston Churchill's admonition to "make the press your friends," Onassis cringed at the sudden flood of unfavorable publicity. His image, he felt, was tarnished. How to re-enter the public's fancy again as a wholesome Hellenic boy?

Onassis solved the problem even before the ink was dry on his name in the daily press, which was playing him up as a villain who had defrauded the U. S. government. He went to Washington, called the reporters to a press conference, and announced that he intended to build ten to fifteen tankers in the United States to transport oil from Saudi Arabia under an exclusive agreement he had signed with that country.

The deal could mean at least $75,000,000 worth of business for American shipbuilders, Onassis said.

But his magnanimity was just a cover by Aristotle for what was already beginning to be a war of nerves with the U. S. government and the Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco).

The Greek shipping magnate had triggered the fuss when he made a pact with Saudi Arabia's King Saud for Onassis' tankers to carry a big share of the oil produced there by Aramco. Aramco was fuming and government officials were fretting because they feared it would result in a monopoly that would squeeze out other oil tanker companies which were transporting Saudi Arabia's black gold on a competitive basis.

Onassis defended his agreement with King Saud as a "purely business deal," and then flexed his corporate muscle by saying he doubted that either Aramco or the U. S. government could upset the agreement, which understandably was regarded in oil industry circles as one of the biggest international business coups pulled off in a long time.

"The agreement couldn't be more businesslike," he said. "Saudi Arabia just wants to get more revenue from its oil."

(He didn't say anything about revenue to Onassis.)

"If I hadn't made the agreement, someone else would have. Or the Saudi Arabian government would have done it by buying or building ships of its own."

Then Onassis revealed that he was dickering with the Bethlehem Steel Co. to build the ten to fifteen tankers.

But there was one ripple in the otherwise smooth-flowing deal. Onassis, still a citizen of Argentina, would have to get the Maritime Administration's approval to build the tankers in this country. Whether such permission would be granted while he was under indictment was viewed as problematic.

Onassis was then asked to explain details of this agreement with Saudi Arabia, which had been hinted at in newspaper stories for days. The Greek shipping king then took the wraps off the deal.

He said his tankers, under the agreement, would carry only about 10 per cent of the annual output of forty million tons of oil produced by Aramco in Saudi Arabia.

He would pay Saudi Arabia twenty-one cents a ton for the oil carried in his tankers.

He would create a tanker company in Saudi Arabia, transfer twenty to twenty-five of his tankers to that company and put them under the Arabian flag. No tankers and only a few coastal cargo ships then flew that flag.

And there were other concessions under the agree-

ment—namely, he would train Saudi Arabian crews to operate the tankers, the tankers would carry oil without charge between Arabian ports, and he would build a drydock in an Arabian port to service the tankers.

By disclosing this pact, Onassis thought he would help improve his public image—especially if he stressed how much business he was going to give the United States, rather than how he would give one of its most important foreign investors the business. He was astonished to find he had stirred up an even bigger storm than the indictment had brought on. He was an even more controversial figure than before.

Protests rang out from several countries, including Great Britain and Norway, and from the Arabian-American Oil Co. The company insisted that its contract with the Saudi Arabian government called for making oil available not just to Onassis but to every tanker company on a free-for-all basis.

The U. S. government then stepped in and struck the hardest blow, lodging a protest to Saudi Arabia against the agreement granting Onassis the oil transportation concessions.

The government officials argued that if the agreement stood, there would be nothing to prevent similar agreements with other Middle Eastern governments to give virtual, if not complete monopolies to freeze American shipping out of the transportation field in which American oil producing interests were involved.

One of the nation's more outspoken critics of Onassis' deal was Representative Emanuel Celler (D.-N.Y.),

who predicted that official action would be taken to break up the Greek wheeler dealer's monopolistic pact.

The Saudi Arabian agreement, Celler held, was in violation of concessions made to that government by the American-controlled Arabian-American Oil Co. He said it might be found that the agreement breached international law, "particularly since the agreement contains terms of boycott against a friendly nation, the Republic of Israel."

Then Celler disclosed he had heard that the "original monopolistic agreement, reportedly concluded at Jidda on January 20th, was amended on April 7th by a secret addendum in which Onassis reputedly pledged that no Jew should have any interest in any of these companies, directly or indirectly, and assumed an obligation that his company would have no dealings with the Republic of Israel."

Onassis was in Paris when Celler's blast hit the newspapers.

If one should wonder why Onassis was in Paris when the court had directed him to stay in this country, one must remember that there are more escape hatches in the laws of our land than there are in all of Onassis' ships at sea.

Again looking to image-improvement, which was fast deteriorating now, Onassis issued a statement denying that any aspects of his agreement with Saudi Arabia were monopolistic or discriminatory, or that fuel prices would be increased because of it.

Suddenly Onassis felt impelled to wave the stars and stripes.

"I consider myself an unwritten citizen of the United States because, when I was a little boy in Turkey, an American vice-consul saved me from death . . ."

Because of that, Onassis went on, he would do anything desired by the United States to alter existing arrangements if it could be proved they were monopolistic. Now he would settle for a piece of the whole pie rather than the increasingly strong prospect he faced of getting none at all.

But he strongly denied that the pact with King Saud had any traces of monopolistic intent. He charged that rival oil and shipping interests had themselves formed a monopoly by banding together to apply pressure on the State Department and the British government "to squeeze me out."

"I warned the leading oil companies for years of a trend among many nations to build their own merchant marine and tanker fleets and my warnings were ignored.

"As a result, because I regard transporting oil as a life-and-death matter to my own business, I was forced to make new arrangements. The result has been, to put it mildly, the oil companies got together to try and blow me up."

The agreement with King Saud was further denounced by the Norwegian Shipowners Association and the British Chamber of Shipping. Stavros Niarchos jumped into the efforts to "blow up" Onassis by branding the agreement "a political crime and an economic monstrosity."

Aramco and other companies reportedly put pres-

sure on King Saud to reconsider. More details of the deal were planted in the world press by the anti-Onassis coalition—and now the stories really began to make Onassis hurt.

One unconfirmed account said that Onassis' main contact with the Saudis had been Hjalmar Schacht, Hitler's Minister of Finance. Now it appeared that Congressman Celler had been drilling into the oil well of truth when he charged that Jews would be barred from the companies and business with Israel prohibited. With an ex-Nazi teamed with the Arabs, such a boycott certainly sounded plausible.

Other reports told of huge bribes deposited in Swiss banks for friendly Saudi officials.

Despite the stories, Onassis was full of bravado.

"I'm a businessman," he crowed. "I made a business deal. I didn't hurt anyone. I just caught them (the oil companies) with their pants down. Thirty or more years ago when they were writing oil concessions none of them took into consideration the transport of oil.

"They stuck to drilling, exploitation, and marketing. When they made these oil agreements, transportation was not considered as a major item. As things turned out, particularly after the war, transportation became important and profit-making."

Whatever Onassis had to say, King Saud had the final word. He canceled the deal with Aristotle.

Then Aristotle Socrates Onassis delivered this eulogy over the remains of his first major business failure:

"I made one great mistake. I never thought that

in our world emotions could override all business reason. For almost a year I had reports that Saudi Arabia was looking for someone to provide it with a fleet to carry its surplus oil. I knew that certain parties were out to get the contract.

"I sat and watched and it was like watching a loaded gun lying around there, which anyone could grab.

"Finally I became convinced that somebody was about to make the deal and rather than let it go to competitors, I went for it myself.

"And landed in the biggest mess of my life.

"My intention was 99 per cent defensive. But when I went to the people to whom I owed so much (presumably Aramco), who had helped me in the past, they would not listen to me. They threw me out.

"They got emotional. Their attitude was, 'Here is a man we fed, whom we helped to grow'—which is quite true—'and the dirty heel turns around and shows his ingratitude!'

"Why, it is exactly the same as an employee who makes a move, learns that his boss is mad at him, goes to the boss to explain his reasons and before he has the time to open his mouth his boss yells at him, 'You are a disloyal so and so, get the hell out of here'—and the employee has no chance to explain what he meant."

It was quite a different attitude from Onassis' earlier stand when he spoke about catching the big companies "with their pants down." Suddenly he had been humbled. The oil companies which had been using his tankers boycotted him for the next two years.

Onassis, it turned out, had been caught with his own pants down. He may not have been aware of that ancient Thermopylaen proverb that a Greek must never allow that to happen to him.

And now he faced further chagrin.

He was about to have his bare butt exposed and spanked publicly . . .

Chapter 9

A BAD MONTH

November, 1954, was a very bad month for Aristotle Socrates Onassis.

On the 19th, a lawsuit for $14,000,000 damages was filed in Paris by a Greek shipowner named Spyridon Catapodis, charging he had been defrauded by Onassis of promised compensation for negotiating the oil contracts with the Saudi Arabian government, which as yet had not been invalidated by King Saud.

Five days later, Onassis' troubles multiplied when the Department of Justice filed a recovery suit in Federal Court in New York asking for $20,000,000 from the Greek shipping padishah. The complaint also named three other individuals and the six corporations involved in that post-war purchase of surplus ships under the Ship-Sales Act.

Onassis and the others were accused of fraudulently misrepresenting that the purchasing companies were "citizen" firms, controlled as required in the law by United States citizens.

In this complaint the truth about what happened to

the ships that Onassis and friends had acquired from the government finally came out.

U. S. Attorney J. Edward Lumbard, of the Southern District of New York, spelled it out, maintaining that when the ships were purchased, actual control of the purchasing corporations remained in the hands of the cunning non-citizens.

After the papers were filed, one of Onassis' battery of legal brains, attorney Edward J. Ross, refuted the government's allegations, called them "completely unfounded," and promised that they would be contested in court.

"There were no misrepresentations," Ross insisted. "At the time of the purchases, the U. S. Maritime Commission studied and approved the transactions, knowing that the Onassis interests retained a large, but not controlling, interest in the companies involved."

At this time it was also revealed that local banks held mortgages on some of the ships amounting to $8,000,000.

The complaint further demanded an accounting of the earnings of the vessels and estimated the profits "in excess of $20,000,000."

If this aspect of litigation against him is revealing, then a study of Spyridon Catapodis' suit is even more expository.

Catapodis, a man with past business connections with Iraqi officials, charged that Onassis had signed a contract with him which would have been worth $14,000,000 over a thirty-year period. But, the plain-

tive plaintiff complained, the signature of A. S. Onassis had somehow vanished from his contract.

Disappearing ink in Ari's pen?

As Catapodis told the story, he was in contact with some highly placed officials in Saudi Arabia for the oil contract. He said he approached some of them, men like Mohammed Alireza, his brother Ali, and Sheik Abdullah Al Sulaiman a Hamdan, then Saudi Arabian minister of finance, while they were living it up in the south of France at the time.

Perhaps some may think these Arabs were behaving like nomads who were on the move a lot, but they weren't exactly carrying their tents on their backs. The Alirezas ran a shipping company which covered coastal waters in the Arabian peninsula, and they were agents for several American auto companies, and for some of the leading appliance companies.

The brothers were educated at the University of California (one married a California girl) and they had seen a lot of Hollywood detective movies featuring disappearing-ink plots.

Catapodis' suit finally and unequivocally confirmed Congressman Celler's charge that Onassis had hired Hitler's one-time financial adviser, Hjalmar Schacht (only one of Der Führer's top aides never described as "the *feared* Hjalmar Schacht," because he was too busy with the bookkeeping to commit genocide) to proposition the Arabian finance minister directly.

But all this did, according to Catapodis, was to anger the Arabs and precipitate a threat to torpedo the contract if Aristotle didn't stop putting on the squeeze.

Onassis apologized and entered into a personal deal with the Alirezas, according to Catapodis.

Then Catapodis came to the interesting part of the story: that just before King Saud was to sign the contract, the Alirezas discovered Onassis' signature on his personal deal with him was fading away.

Then when the same thing purportedly happened to Catapodis' contract, he said he went to Aristotle and asked for an explanation. His story is that Onassis dismissed the whole incident as a mistake, asked to have the contract with the disappearing signature returned to him, and promised to send a better one along the next day.

So, Catapodis lamented, he wound up not only without a signature—but without even a contract.

To prove that a contract really existed, Catapodis named a witness at the pre-trial examination in the libel suit: Leon Turrou, a former agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and a colonel in the wartime Criminal Investigation Division with the U. S. Army in Europe.

That was the gist of the cloak-and-dagger story told by Catapodis and his attorneys in the court records.

There were other disclosures about the Saudi deal which ultimately led King Saud to wash his hands of the whole thing and leave word with his secretary that if Ari called to say he was not available.

One of those other illuminating insights, for example, pertained to a pilgrimage Catapodis made previously to Nice, France, where he dropped in on the British consul general and signed a deposition stating that bribe payments amounting to more than

one million dollars had been paid to Saudi Arabian officials.

One document purported to show that 250,000 British pounds had been demanded by a Saudi Arabian official in his own handwriting on the stationery of the Hotel Claridge in Paris, where some of the negotiations had been conducted.

Photostatic copies of these documents were obtained by newsmen and were given wide circulation in newspapers. Onassis, who was shown one of the copies, labeled them a palpable fraud and insisted the signature at the bottom was not his. He also denied Catapodis had ever been a negotiator for him.

Of course, Catapodis' suit went down the briny deep along with Onassis' hopes for a multimillion dollar killing when King Saud scuttled the deal.

Onassis' troubles with the United States lingered long after his headaches with the Saudi Arabian thing had ended. Then that mess was cleared up—but not before Onassis agreed to pay the government seven million dollars in penalties!

In the final action, in which he was specifically accused of acquiring twenty-three surplus ships by fraud, a plea of guilty was entered in the Federal District Court in Washington by six Onassis companies.

Judge Luther W. Youngdahl imposed fines aggregating $160,000 upon the firms, then dismissed charges against Onassis and the other individuals named in the eight-count criminal indictment.

Recommendation to the court to drop the criminal charges was made by the Justice Department, which

was then headed by Attorney General Herbert Brownell—a name to remember.

The actual settlement of the civil litigation, announced by that same Justice Department, also brought on dismissal of the suit against Onassis and associates pending in New York.

The agreement stipulated that Onassis must satisfy the Justice Department by the following May 1, 1956, that the corporations which would operate the ships in the future were American-controlled.

The settlement involved thirteen tankers, seven Victory dry cargo vessels, two cargo ships in the Liberty class, and one whaling vessel.

Since the original purchase, one of the vessels had been lost at sea, seventeen others had been seized by the government in United States ports, and five others were still in foreign waters but assumed to be within this country's jurisdiction by the terms of the settlement with Onassis.

In the agreement, Onassis promised to pay $6,600,000 in cash and to release a claim he had against the government for $400,000. Moreover, Onassis' group was to pay $500,000 more in principal and interest on outstanding Maritime Administration mortgages against some of the vessels. And the domestic corporations that owned the ships were also obligated to pay the $5,500,000 mortgage balances on the ships.

All in all, it was a very costly surplus ships deal that Aristotle Onassis had pulled off.

It looked as though the wily Onassis had been taught a costly $7,000,000 lesson. But Aristotle Soc-

rates would show that he was as canny with money as his namesakes were as philosophers.

Although as one of the world's richest men he could well afford to write off the $7,000,000 as an expense for the broadening of his horizons, Onassis was yet to prove that the fine was, in fact, merely an investment that would pay him handsome dividends.

Chapter 10

ONASSIS THE WHALER

THINGS got worse for Aristotle Onassis before they got better.

Another little-known interest of the Greek shipping tycoon that surfaced during the first half of the 1950s when his image was losing luster in the public eye was his whaling fleet, started in the late forties.

Onassis was proud of that fleet. He considered the operation a much bigger gamble than Monte Carlo, although he insisted his whaling business was conducted on a scale of efficiency undreamed of in Melville's time.

"Poor old Moby Dick," Onassis would say. "In those days a whaler would be gone two or three years and had to go through horrors.

"Today my whaling fleet has nineteen units: a 'mother ship,' sixteen chasers, two tankers to supply fuel. It also has a helicopter to spot the whales, radar, and for the men, a hospital, dentist, swimming pool, and movie.

"That is what I call gambling. To spend $60,000 a day for six months to go fishing. If you catch whales, that's just the first thing. What about the price of whale oil that year?"

But that kind of gambling would soon end for Onassis, who lorded over a thousand men in that fleet.

The beginning of the end came when Peru, Chile, and Ecuador arbitrarily decided to declare a 200-mile off-shore limit on their territorial waters.

Onassis' shrewd business sense told him that at $60,000 a day to operate one must catch a whale of a lot of whales. So he ordered his captains to keep catching all of the blubberous species they could get their harpoons on.

The Peruvian Navy, which included two surplus Canadian destroyers that Onassis, ironically, had sold Peru several years earlier, attacked his flagship, the *Olympic Challenger*, and seized the fleet. It was one of the few naval battles that country had won in its history.

Onassis' success in enterprise was due in large part to the "second sight" that friends and relatives credit him with having. And part of his success is also attributed to his love of insurance.

"He'll insure even against insomnia tonight," his cousin Constantin Konialides said. "But he will sleep well for it."

Onassis' devotion to insurance paid off well in 1954 when Peru seized his fleet and fined him a whopping three million dollars. It was Lloyd's of London which

had Onassis' ships indemnified against seizure. It cost the world's biggest underwriters $33,000 each day they were tied up.

The fleet was finally freed by Peru, after the British Foreign Office intervened in Lloyd's behalf, but Onassis was beginning to weary of doing battle with maritime states over whale blubber and ambergris.

Beset by constant lawsuits—the latest at the time being a claim by the Norwegian government which tied up a shipload of valuable whale oil in Holland—Onassis declared he'd had it in whaling.

The Norwegians had charged Onassis exceeded the quota on the catch of whales, was catching them out of season, and was violating international limitations on the minimum size of the whales.

Onassis finally settled his dispute by promising to pay about $430,000 into a fund to be used for the benefit of the Norwegian whaling industry.

Fed up with whales, Onassis sold his fleet for $8,500,000 to the Japanese in 1956.

But this setback, no more so than any of the others, did not inhibit Onassis' energetic—and sometimes mysterious—march toward an ever-expanding fortune and toward the gratification of his hedonist's appetite for the pleasures and luxuries of life.

By now Onassis had, or was about to acquire, such worldly personal gratifications as a villa in Monte Carlo, a Paris penthouse with eighteenth-century paneling and Louis XV furniture, a house in fashionable Athens, a hacienda in Montevideo, Uruguay—and, wonder of wonders, an order at the Howaldt Yards in the North German port of Kiel for the most modern,

most elaborate, and most expensive yacht of the post-war era.

The Howaldt Yards, incidentally, had been reported bought by a syndicate headed by Onassis in July, 1952.

The statistics of the yacht, which was being shaped from the former Canadian frigate *Stormont*, were startling.

The 325-foot long pleasure ship, destined to become the peripatetic headquarters of the Greek shipping magnate, was designed to have quarters for its owner running the full width of the bridge deck; on one side of the owner's sleeping cabin would be the dressing room, on the other a bathroom. The bathtub would be sunk into the deck and decorated with mosaics.

But these were merely minor fittings compared with the specifications for the rest of the ship.

There were accommodations for fifteen other passengers; on the afterdeck, an amphibian plane, sailboat, and speedboat in addition to the usual complement of lifeboats; a fireplace and easy chairs in the owner's lounge; behind the lounge, a hall with a marble-railed spiral staircase leading to the main deck; a doctor's operating room with complete equipment including X-ray machines; two guest lounges on the guest deck separated by a sliding door of antique Japanese lacquer and operated by switches hidden under the carpets; a section of ceiling in a small corridor that flipped down to serve as a motion picture screen; one wall of the smoking room inlaid with lapis lazuli, a glittering semiprecious stone costing $3.50 a

square inch; another side of the smoking room fitted to slide open, giving access to the swimming pool whose mosaic bottom can be raised to become a dance floor, etc., etc.

And, oh yes, for the lady passengers who would travel on the yacht—a gold bidet.

This colossal toy was finally launched in the spring of 1954, and Onassis proudly sailed it to the Ionian Sea and installed a crew of forty aboard.

A master of fussy overdecoration, this floating palace would in the years to come be Onassis' prime bait to lure the famous. He would become a gatherer of personages (Winston Churchill, Elizabeth Taylor, Greta Garbo, Melina Mercouri, Maria Callas—especially Maria Callas!—King Saud, Princess Lee Radziwill, and Jacqueline Kennedy are among hundreds of luminaries who would sail with Aristotle in the years to come) as he tried to confirm his self-image as a latter-day Odysseus.

As the *Christina* left the waters of the Ionian one day not long ago and steamed through the Bosphorus off Istanbul's shores, Onassis stood on deck and looked at the land of his birth.

"I've traveled many hundreds of thousands of miles," he said, "and now I am back . . ."

As king.

Chapter 11

ARI THE OMNI-PARTISAN

A NON-PARTISAN is one who doesn't adhere to any established party. An omni-partisan is a man who plays all parties. He also could be said to play all ends against the middle.

In 1958, the Republican National Committee and House Senate campaign committees received $2,349,804 in contributions for their Congressional campaigns. When the GOP filed its final declaration on the 1958 election with the clerk in the House of Representatives, the man who took the top contributor spot on the GOP Senate campaign committee report with a donation of $2,500 was A. S. Onassis of New York.

At the very same time, the Democratic National Committee and House and Senate campaign committees also filed their report, showing contributions amounting to $1,239,804. And the man who headed the list of big Democratic contributors was Aristotle Socrates Onassis of Monaco.

There has never been an explanation from the

Greek benefactor for his duality in the two-party system—or why he felt impelled to contribute to the arena of politics. This, incidentally, is only one of two known bestowals Onassis is known to have made in the United States, where he has reaped millions upon millions of dollars in profits.

The Greek Orthodox Cathedral, for example, where Aristotle and Tina were married, and which was his parish while he resided in Sutton Place, could find only one instance of receiving a contribution of any size from this man who is one of the richest in the world.

This was a $750 gift to the church made at the time of his marriage—a time when it is a custom for the bridegroom to make a donation.

The Greek Orthodox community in Manhattan has been seeking funds for years to build a new cathedral in the borough to fulfill an obligation it feels it has toward the American culture. Other religions have done this—the Roman Catholics built St. Patrick's Cathedral; the Episcopalians erected St. John the Divine, and the Jews constructed Temple Emanu El.

Archbishop Iacovos, the spiritual leader of the Greek Orthodox Church in North and South America, and the Rev. George Papadeas and his assistant priests at the cathedral are not anxious to duplicate the elaborate landmark edifices that the other religions have, but they are desirous of erecting a modest and enduring memorial to God in the name of the Greek Orthodox faith in the nation's largest city.

The big drawback is not the cost of the building,

although it would be quite substantial, but the formidable cost of the land, which could run as high as $15,000,000.

The Church does not have that kind of money, nor can it commit itself to a mortgage of that size with any hope of meeting the prohibitive installments.

It is not the intention here to suggest that Aristotle Socrates Onassis volunteer to build a new cathedral for the Greek Orthodox of New York, although he could well afford to without feeling a pinch. But there is a seeming incongruity in Onassis' words and deeds that beg elucidation.

In the biography by Willi Frischauer, and in countless feature stories in newspapers and magazines over the years, Onassis has always stressed his early roots in religion, influenced by his grandmother Gethsemane, a deeply pious woman. When he was married in 1946, the priest who officiated at the ceremony brought poignant memories for Onassis. Frischauer wrote: "For them, but particularly for the bridegroom, the ceremony had a deeply nostalgic undertone, for the priest assisting in the elaborate rites was none other than Aristo's erstwhile theology teacher from Smyrna, Father Euthimion, like them a refugee from Asia Minor."

Frischauer perhaps should have said "him" instead of "them," for Tina was not a refugee from Smyrna but a native-born Londoner.

But, as the record shows, a return of a "deeply nostalgic undertone" experienced in the very House of God whose physical image his erstwhile theology teacher, Father Basil Efthimiou, was even then trying

to improve, did not elicit more than a $750 tug on Onassis' purse strings.

Yet the American two-party system in that year of 1958 was enriched in its coffers by five thousand dollars from a man who cannot even vote in this country.

The question is why Aristotle Socrates Onassis contributed such generous amounts to the Republican and Democratic Parties that year (and perhaps in other years too).

Some students of the Onassis mystique point out that 1958 was a particularly hectic and significant year in the rising fortunes of this Greek shipping potentate. Most of the activity that year centered in the very halls of Congress, to which Onassis' political beneficence was directed.

There were two separate but not entirely unrelated matters that came before the House that year in which Onassis held center stage.

One inquiry was by the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, which was trying to learn why Onassis had defaulted on a $50,000,000 contract to build three supertankers for American-flag operation. He had agreed to the contract in the settlement of the government's earlier $20,000,000 suit in the fraudulent ships deal.

(Now for the first time the country was learning that the $7,000,000 Onassis was ordered to pay in 1954 was not the whole story; that he was allowed to keep fourteen tankers which figured in the fraud and transfer them from the American flag to the Liberian —and in return he'd build the $50,000,000 worth of tankers here.)

The other inquiry, which was an outgrowth of the first one, concerned Herbert Brownell, President Eisenhower's Attorney General, who handled the government's 1955 final settlement of civil and criminal suits against Onassis.

The same House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee called Brownell to square himself with charges by Representative Herbert Zelenko, a fiery, outspoken Democrat from Manhattan, that Brownell had a financial interest in the settlement he had hammered out with the Greek shipowner.

Zelenko broke out records that showed Brownell was a partner in the law firm of Lord, Day and Lord from 1948 to 1950, and that it was this law firm which had advised Onassis and his partners in the Liberty ship deal on how to circumnavigate the provisions of the law designed to make sure that American citizens owned and controlled those ships.

The Congressional probes were precipitated by Onassis' notice of intention to walk out on his agreement to build the three supertankers on the grounds that United States oil import restrictions had ruined the market for tankers.

The Justice Department promptly filed suit against the Greek shipper, charging breach of his agreement. The suit demanded that he return the fourteen ships he was allowed to transfer to the Liberian flag, and turn over his profits from that operation to the government.

Representative Zelenko then recalled his own warning the previous year that the government's deal with Onassis was full of "loopholes" and that the Greek

might welsh on his promise to build the supertankers. But Zelenko had been silenced by Maritime Administrator Clarence G. Morse, who insisted at the time that he was "proud" of the arrangement worked with Aristotle.

As soon as the Justice Department filed notice of its intent to sue Onassis, Representative Robert C. Bonner, chairman of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, announced he would hold hearings on the Onassis agreement with the government.

When the committee began its investigation on June 17, Bonner let it be known that his "grave concern" was with the fact that Onassis' interests had obtained the benefits of the agreement through the transfer of the fourteen tankers and, at the same time, despite assurances from Justice and the Maritime Administration that the new ships would be built, "they were now defaulting in their performance with respect to the construction of the new ships."

Onassis was the first witness and he quickly established before the Congressmen that he has a facility for quick and sharp responses to questions that do not pretend to be friendly. The questioning by Congressman Zelenko was penetrating, and Onassis' answers were illuminating.

Perhaps the most revealing portion of the probe came when Onassis commented on the tactics the United States government employed to settle the civil suit that had cost him $7,000,000. Onassis said it did so by bringing pressure against him with a criminal indictment.

He revealed details of what had happened in the

office of Assistant U. S. Attorney Warren Burger after he had gone there with his lawyers to find out what the indictment was all about. Onassis testified that his first question at the meeting was: "Well, here I am; what is the ransom?"

He quoted Burger as answering, "Twenty million dollars."

"I wanted to be a free man," Onassis continued. "I told them that if they would drop the criminal action I would fight the civil suit in the courts, even if it took all my life, and that I would win it. But they would not."

Onassis was asked to explain what he meant by that statement.

"Ransom means a recapture of your freedom," he said. "It used to happen among the best of people. Kings used to take kings and pay ransom."

He finally settled by paying the multimillion-dollar penalty, and thereby "I paid the United States government twice for my ships."

Zelenko tried to establish whether Onassis exercised more control over the American-citizen companies than his own personal—and ostensibly limited—stock holdings of 25 per cent might indicate.

That stock was registered in the name of Ariona Corporation, and the committee members repeatedly asked whether Ariona was in his name, but the witness couldn't recall. He said it might be in the name of one of his many other concerns, but that in any case he owned those companies, too.

"If it is in the name of someone else, then I own

that someone else," he finally said in the grand manner.

Then Onassis mounted the soap box to orate on all the great good his companies had accomplished and how those activities had benefited the American economy by providing work on the construction of his ships.

"If it was another country," Onassis said, "I would be knighted; here I am penalized."

Then he was asked whether he had started buying American surplus ships on the advice of Lord, Day and Lord, the New York law firm in which Herbert Brownell had been a partner. Onassis conceded that was true.

"But I do not know Mr. Brownell personally," he remarked.

Onassis also admitted he had consulted several other law firms on ship deals over the years, but his recollection of dealings with Brownell's firm elicited a chuckle from the witness.

"We paid (them) a fancy fee, too," he said.

Onassis was a witness for three days, and at times he threw the committee into fits of laughter with his oddly phrased responses.

At one point when he did not agree with the contention that the person who controls the purse strings controls the operation of a ship company, he quipped, "A bank gives me $50,000,000 payable over thirty years. What say has that bank over me? Their money doesn't talk at all. It talks as much as a fish."

Onassis also showed a talent for reasoning that could rival his philosopher forebears.

"This business of ships is a fascinating thing. A ship is worth $4,000,000 today and in a few months goes down to $500,000 and vice versa."

Perhaps one of the most revealing details of his deal to settle his dispute with the government over the money he owed was that title of the fourteen tankers in question was placed in an irrevocable trust for his two children with the Grace National Bank of New York. The trust was established as a guarantee that the ships involved would be controlled by American citizens—and the testimony to the Congressional committee indicated Onassis had no voice in its affairs.

During the later hearings which summoned Herbert Brownell to explain his role in hammering out the settlement with Onassis, the former Attorney General persistently denied any wrongdoing. He explained that when he was appointed to President Eisenhower's Cabinet in January, 1953, he at once severed his connections with Lord, Day and Lord.

At that time, he testified, the Onassis matter had already been presented to a grand jury for study. (It took the jury two years to study the case and return indictments.)

"At all times thereafter until late in 1955 when recommendations for disposition of the cases were made by the Civil and Criminal Divisions, I took no part in the handling of these cases in the Department of Justice."

He said his participation had been "restricted to approval of the recommendations from my assistants in whom I had confidence."

But Brownell acknowledged in response to Repre-

sentative Zelenko's questioning that as a member of Lord, Day and Lord prior to becoming Attorney General, he had participated in fees received from Onassis—and thereby had been indirectly associated with the matter.

He also conceded that as Attorney General he had been "administratively responsible" for the handling of the Onassis cases in the department. But again he denied any closer connection with them, in either instance.

Brownell then admitted that he did not tell anyone in the Justice Department about Lord, Day and Lord's association with Onassis at the time he approved settlement of the government suit.

It would have been "improper" for him to do so, he said, because it would have implied that he had some "special interest" in the case.

After Zelenko's questioning of Brownell went into the middle of its second hour, Representative Thor C. Tollefson (R.-Wash.) raised a strong protest.

"We've gone over and over all this before and haven't gotten anywhere," Tollefson complained. "I don't know that I've ever listened to so many insinuations, innuendoes, and assumptions."

Then came the clincher that brought the committee's investigation to an abrupt—if not decisive—end.

"I think the Government had made an excellent settlement and couldn't have done anything else in the Onassis case."

Then Tollefson turned to Brownell. "You've nothing to be ashamed of. I think the Justice Department did the only thing they could do."

One small storm was whipped up in Congress again by Senator Williams in the spring of 1959 when he warned that Onassis was going to get an $8,000,000 windfall in a contract signed with the Maritime Administration.

Williams charged that the government was underwriting 87½ per cent of the $51,300,000 cost of three large tankers that Onassis had ordered at Bethlehem Steel's yards in Quincy, Mass.

"It's a windfall," Williams said, "which grew out of that earlier deal under which Onassis got the $20,000,000 advantage from the Maritime Administration."

He explained that the original deal with Onassis, in which he was allowed to register his ships under the Liberian flag, was justified by the administration on grounds that Onassis had agreed to build the three huge tankers in American shipyards—without any U. S. aid—and that they would be controlled by American-owned companies.

The government agency also had the protection of a forfeit clause which insured an $8,000,000 payment by Onassis in the event he canceled the contract.

But what had happened now, the Senator went on, was that the Maritime agency had waived the $8,000,000—and, moreover, Onassis was to get aid on the construction.

"This, in effect, is an $8,000,000 gift to Mr. Onassis," Williams fumed as he took the administration to task for trying to justify the contract "as being in the best interest of the American taxpayers."

He raised the perennial cry that the controlling company which had placed the order, Victory Car-

riers, Inc., a Delaware corporation, was not an American corporation but one actually controlled by Onassis.

"The Americans are mere figureheads," the Senator protested, "because they do not own a single share of stock in the company."

He said all of Victory Carriers' stock was owned by United States Petroleum Carriers, Inc., three-quarters of whose stock was owned by a foreign company controlled by Onassis, who had been at the time and still was an Argentine citizen.

"Mr. Onassis," the Senator concluded wryly, "arranged that his two children be born in this country so that they could have the right to claim American citizenship when they reach maturity."

Perhaps now there was the explanation at last of why Aristotle Socrates Onassis donated so generously to the Republican and Democratic Parties: he wanted to preserve the two-party system as a heritage for his son and daughter when they reached voting age.

Chapter 12

ENTER MARIA CALLAS . . . GOODBYE TINA

Maria Callas is a Brooklyn-born soprano whose greatest professional triumphs have been registered in La Scala and other European opera houses.

As a young man, Aristotle Socrates Onassis loved opera in Buenos Aires, but now in the middle age of life he couldn't care less for it.

But Maria Callas was another kind of melody —and when she went sailing with Aristotle on the *Christina* in the summer of 1959 the cruise struck a swift, sour note in both their marriages.

Aristotle and Maria met at a party given by Arturo Toscanini's daughter, the Countess Castelbarco, in Venice in the summer of 1957, but the warm glow of their friendship did not burn into the bright flames of romance until late September, 1959, when Maria went sailing with Ari. That was when tongues began to wag—because the cruise produced some incredible developments.

To begin with, Sir Winston and Lady Churchill

were guests on the *Christina* when Maria, then thirty-six, with her wealthy Italian industrialist husband of ten years, Giovanni Battista Meneghini, then sixty-two, went aboard the yacht for the first time to take a Mediterranean cruise. Tina and the children were in New York.

Right under the eyes of Sir Winston and Lady Churchill, Onassis stole Maria away from Giovanni. As Meneghini later told friends how it happened, he almost broke down.

"I realized our marriage was shattered when Maria returned aboard from nightclubbing in Istanbul. She had gone with Onassis.

"She just said that everything was over between us, that it was no use to go on because she was in love with Onassis and that I might as well go back and join my sick mother."

On September 8, after the cruise was over, Maria and Meneghini announced the breakup of their marriage. On September 28, Giovanni filed suit for divorce.

"We were absolutely happy until we attended the ill-fated cruise aboard Onassis' luxury yacht," he said with sadness.

Onassis shrugged it off. "I am a sailor," he observed, "and this kind of thing happens to sailors."

While he was being a sailor, his wife went to see attorney Sol A. Rosenblatt in New York. On November 25, a suit for divorce was filed in New York County Supreme Court, and at the time an action of this type in New York State could be pursued on only one ground: adultery.

But surprise, surprise!

The "other" woman was not "Mrs. M. M.," as everyone expected she might be, but "Mrs. J. R.," whoever she may be. Infidelities were charged as having occurred in Paris, aboard the *Christina*, and at Onassis' home in Oyster Bay.

Everyone wondered who "Mrs. J. R." was.

Then, just hours after the divorce action was filed, Jeanne Schley Rhinelander, ex-wife of New York realtor Oakley Rhinelander, II, held court with reporters to deny a New York columnist's story that she was the woman in the life of the wealthy shipowner.

But just as Maria, who was very much mixed up in the life of the Golden Greek, had done, the tall, shapely 34-year-old divorcée admitted, "I am an old friend of Mr. and Mrs. Onassis."

While neither Tina nor her attorney had officially identified "Mrs. J. R.," the coincidence of the initials, plus the fact that Mrs. Rhinelander had been a guest on Onassis' yacht, brought reporters to her French villa in Grasse to ask if there was any connection.

"I did not wish to tell you or anyone anything earlier," Mrs. Rhinelander said, "because I didn't realize how serious the situation was. After all, it may not be me.

"I have not heard from Mr. Onassis since the divorce story broke, but I expect he'll telephone me now.

"I'm astonished that my name should be pronounced in a scandal in which I'm not even involved. I respect and know Mr. Onassis well and I remain his faithful friend."

She said she had not seen Aristotle for several

months and was terribly worried over the reports of her involvement with him, not only for herself but for her mother and her two little girls.

Onassis, who was in Monaco, commented about the whole thing, "My wife's action surprises me little. You will understand easily that I have no comment to make. First, I must find out the exact text of the request. I must know exactly what my wife wants to do."

Papers in matrimonial actions are not open for public inspection in New York, but after the papers were filed, Tina, who had hitherto shunned publicity, issued a formal statement through attorney Rosenblatt.

"It is almost thirteen years since Onassis and I were married in New York City. Since then, he has become one of the world's richest men, but his great wealth has not brought me happiness with him nor, as the world knows, has it brought him happiness with me.

"After we parted this summer in Venice, I had hoped that Mr. Onassis loved our children enough and respected our privacy sufficiently to meet with me or through lawyers with my lawyer, Mr. Rosenblatt, to straighten out our problems. But that was not to be.

"Mr. Onassis knows positively that I want none of his wealth and that I am solely concerned with the welfare of our children. I deeply regret that Mr. Onassis leaves me no alternative other than a New York suit for divorce.

"I am making this statement only because I have been besieged by newspapers everywhere for some comment, which up to now I have refused.

"For my part, I will always wish Mr. Onassis well and I expect that after this action is concluded he will continue to enjoy the kind of life which he apparently desires to live but in which I have played no real part.

"I shall have nothing more to say and I hope I shall be left with my children in peace."

Simultaneously with the filing of the divorce action, Rosenblatt sought an order from Supreme Court Justice Jacob Markowitz, providing that Onassis be informed of his wife's suit by publication, since he was out of the state and could not be served.

Under customary court procedure, two publications were designated to publish notice of the suit for six weeks. Onassis was required to file an answer to the complaint, if he intended to contest the suit, within twenty days after the end of the six-week period.

Tina's suit had come barely a fortnight after Maria and Giovanni had legally separated "by mutual consent" in Brescia, Italy. The "mutual consent" prevented details of Meneghini's suit from becoming part of the public record.

By early April, 1960, reports suddenly sprang up of a reconciliation between Aristotle and Tina. In Paris, the newspaper *France-Dimanche* reported the couple agreed to return to each other after they had spoken by transatlantic telephone. At the time, Tina was in New York and Ari was aboard his yacht with the Churchills cruising Caribbean waters.

"It was not by chance that the master of the yacht *Christina* decided to head for the United States this time," said the French newspaper. "It's because he knows over there Tina and his children are waiting."

France Dimanche went on to credit Princess Grace

for a role in bringing the couple back together b convincing the magnate of the merits of "a delicat reconciliation."

Grace and her husband, Prince Rainier, were sai to have believed that a scandal involving Onassis, on of Monaco's leading figures then, should be avoide at all costs.

But Onassis did not head back to New York. In stead, he debarked at San Juan and flew to Londo with Sir Winston and Lady Churchill.

If the rumors of reconciliation proved false, at leas there was validity in one other report: that Tina wa going to drop her divorce suit. This move was mad official April 5 when attorney Rosenblatt filed a stip ulation in Supreme Court withdrawing the action o November 25.

Rosenblatt let it be known that Tina and Ari had no intentions of reconciling. He said the marriage wa finished and that the couple had reached a separation agreement providing for joint custody of their chil dren. Onassis had signed the pact aboard the *Chris tina* on March 26.

"Contrary to printed reports here and abroad," Rosenblatt said, "the parties have not reconciled, no is there any such prospect in contemplation.

"On the contrary, they have entered into an agree ment to live separate and apart."

The lawyer also volunteered that the stipulatio "makes further litigation unnecessary." He would no elaborate, but such actions are traditionally prelude to divorce suits in states where grounds other tha adultery are provided. Onassis breathed easier—a

tion elsewhere would end the marriage without any sensational evidence.

Yet rumors of reconciliation persisted. Now the stories had 85-year-old Winston Churchill, who had pulled Britain together for her finest hour, playing the role of marriage mender for Ari and Tina.

After dropping her divorce suit, Tina went to St. Moritz for a three-week holiday. On her way back, she stopped in Paris and yielded to an interview with London *Express* staff writer William Hickey.

"The New York suit was dropped at Ari's persistent request," Tina revealed. "Some people, Ari among them, I think, imagined this meant there was a possibility of a reconciliation. There was not, is not and never will be.

"I was willing to avoid, for everyone's sake, the scandal of a New York court hearing, but I am determined to be free.

"That's why I insisted on a legal separation, which prepared the way for divorce in another state."

Tina said once she obtained her decree she would spend most of her time in Europe.

"I want my own place, which I shall buy with my own money. I shall not ask Ari for one cent of alimony. He will be under no obligation to me at all. Nor I to him."

She admitted that some financial provisions would be made for the children, Alexander, now eleven, and Christina, now nine, who would live with their mother. At the time they had the benefit of a trust which their father was required to set up a few years before as part of the settlement in the action the U. S.

government brought against him. The capital was reputed to be about twenty million dollars, but Tina said the trustees—a New York bank—had nothing like that sum available to them.

"The trust is in a mess, but I expect my lawyers will see it put right."

Tina also cleared away all the mystery surrounding the much-rumored dowry that her father allegedly had given the couple (was it one or two Liberty ships?) when they married—and that Stavros Livanos would demand the return of the assets.

"No such dowry exists," Tina said, finally putting all the rumors to rest. "My father wouldn't have dreamed of giving us money. He was opposed to my marriage. And he only gave in after Ari had been courting me for more than a year."

Besides what Tina had already said publicly, what had happened since those happy courting days, more than thirteen years ago, to bring things to their present unhappy state?

"I was only seventeen when I married. And the man I married was the most ambitious in the world.

"He wasn't fabulously rich (he only had about three hundred million dollars at the time) then. In fact he was only just beginning to make his way.

"Life was exciting in those days. He fought the American government, the Peruvian government, the Saudi Arabian government . . . we were always at war. There was one drama after another.

"It was tremendous. He loved it, and so did I. Ari was a wonderful man to be with then.

"His career reached its height about three years ago

"I don't mean businesswise—his businesses have gotten bigger and bigger. Things are too easy now.

"All that Monte Carlo stuff! Buying up the place! I can't tell you how much I dislike Monte Carlo."

Reporter Hickey asked Tina about all the newspaper and magazine photographs of her "having a gay and wonderful time with wonderful people, at wonderful parties" in Monte Carlo.

"Uhh!" Tina squirmed. "Have another look. You'll find I never stayed long in Monte Carlo. He had his friends and I started to find mine (the younger crowd). They weren't international celebrities and most of them have never worn a dinner jacket.

"They weren't famous but they were fun. We had begun to lead pretty well separate lives long before the Callas business.

"Still there was no thought of divorce. I suppose we both imagined something would happen to put things right. Well, in those circumstances, nothing ever does happen. Things just go from bad to worse."

Was the worst thing the Callas affair?

"I don't know that it was particularly bad. But suddenly, while all that to-ing and fro-ing was going on I realized how ridiculous we must look.

"On September 10 last year I was on our yacht in Venice. Ari was flying back, or driving back, or running back. I don't remember quite which. And I took a good look around and had a long talk with myself and I decided to finish with it.

"When Ari got to the *Christina,* I had gone. He missed me by a couple of hours. I didn't even pack. I just went ashore and flew to Paris.

"I haven't seen Ari since. He has phoned me dozen of times. It's pointless. And I think it's got through to him now that we are quite, quite finished."

And what of the future?

"Well, I am still a young woman. I imagine I shall marry again some day. But for the moment I have had marriage."

The divorce Tina was so fiercely determined to get finally was granted to her in a quickie Alabama decree in June, 1960. The grounds: mental cruelty. No other details were revealed—but none were needed. The story of why Tina dumped Ari had already received global circulation. But no one has yet described the scene in Montgomery when Tina appeared some weeks previously to file her action.

Tina walked quickly into the lawyer's office in a building just a scant few blocks from the courthouse. It was a humid day and the city was gripped in the typical heat of a late Alabama spring. Tina's ecru summer suit and pastel blouse, smartly tailored, were beginning to show slight perspiration stains. A wisp of her blonde hair, loosened by the moisture in the air, fell from an otherwise impeccable hairdo.

Although the man she was seeing was merely a referral attorney who handles local legal details in Alabama divorces, the shapely young matron seemed perfectly at ease in this stranger's company when they emerged from his office and went out into the sunshine for the walk to court.

A half dozen other women were in the judge's waiting room, biding their turn to submit their applications for divorce. But Tina rated preferential treat-

ment; her attorney took her straight into the judge's chambers.

She signed a sheaf of papers and was told to go back to her hotel and wait. Several hours later, Tina Onassis was on her way home, free.

And Aristotle Socrates Onassis was again the world's most eligible bachelor.

A few days later, when the news of the decree hit the newspapers, Tina was in Paris. Reporters who went to her for comment found her fairly bubbling over with delight. She was asked if the divorce did not pave the way to marriage with young, wealthy Reinaldo Herrera, Jr., of Venezuela, with whom she had frequently been seen in recent months.

"No," she replied quickly. "I have no intention of marrying anyone."

Sixteen months later, Tina apparently changed her mind. She was going to marry after all. But not Herrera.

The announcement was made in London on October 19, 1961, and by of all people, Aristotle Onassis!

"Tina has told me she plans to marry the Marquess of Blandford," Onassis revealed. "She told me about her plans some time ago. I wished her luck and told her I hoped she would be happy.

"As far as I know the date has not been fixed. I believe she would like it to take place in Paris and at some early date."

Onassis, who pyramided millions into multimillions by being privy to inside information, must have had the inside track on this conjugal union. Even the Marquess, who at thirty five now was twenty six

years younger than Tina's first husband, didn't know about any wedding plans.

"I wish I knew myself when it will be," he told a reporter in Paris.

When Tina, now thirty-one, was finally reached in her Paris apartment, she said, "Yes, it's true—and we are going to marry Monday. I did not want any publicity at all. You know, I've been the focus of attention for so long. Now I just want that all to end. I want to live a quiet and private life."

And the following Monday, they were married.

With the Marquess, Tina was assured of the type of life she desired. She became the Marchioness of Blandford and settled down with her new husband in Charlbury, Oxfordshire, then also took a new Paris apartment in the Avenue Gabriel, a few doors from General Charles de Gaulle's Elysée Palace.

The Marquess, or "Sunny" as he's known to his friends, had been divorced the previous November. He had been born John George Vanderbilt Henry Spencer Churchill, son and heir to the Duke of Marlborough, whose title was 259 years old and one of England's proudest. At the father's death, Blandford would inherit his title and Tina would, of course, become the Duchess of Marlborough.

And then they will go to live in Blenheim Palace, one of the most magnificent houses in the United Kingdom and Winston Churchill's birthplace.

It is one of the few pieces of real estate on the face of the earth that even Aristotle Socrates Onassis' money cannot buy.

Chapter 13

PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD

As the most eligible bachelor of the Western World, Aristotle Socrates Onassis had his pick of blue-eyed blondes, brown-eyed brunettes, and green-eyed redheads.

But after Tina divorced him, Ari's taste ran to the dark-eyed, raven haired girl with the diva's artistic temperament and the swinging teenager's playfulness.

Aristotle and Maria Callas seemed to have been taken up in Cupid's arms and before long no one could mention their names without wondering if they weren't married. Half their friends would say yes, the other half no. They themselves wouldn't say anything.

Aboard the good yacht *Christina*, Ari and Maria sailed halfway around the world, but most of the time they seemed to prefer the privacy and calmness of Ionian waters.

Although Aristotle had lost his taste for opera in his advancing years, he was a faithful devotee when Maria was on stage. He frequently attended her per-

formances at La Scala and other opera houses on the Continent.

Sometimes she would unabashedly make open declarations of love for Ari from the stage, as she did one night while singing the role of Paolina in Donizetti's *Poliuto.* Her eyes shone with love for Ari, who was sitting in the proscenium box with Prince Rainier and Princess Grace.

Throughout the opera, Maria constantly stole glances at Aristotle, and then finally she blew a little kiss to him.

As the weeks went into months and the months became years, speculation over Ari's and Maria's marriage became an almost daily guessing game in the press. Even magazines had a field day.

The usually reliable Italian magazine *Oggi* came out one day with a story that its Paris correspondent had been told by Onassis: "Maria and I are already married. Our wedding took place fifteen days ago in a wonderful ceremony."

No details were spelled out, nor did the story say where the wedding took place. But *Oggi* speculated it may have been held on the beautiful island of Scorpios, which Onassis had recently bought for $50,000.

But if Aristotle was married to Maria, then the question that begged for an answer after that night of January 9, 1965, was this: how come Onassis had been seen in a downtown Athens cabaret with the sexy blonde Greek actress Melina Mercouri?

It was a three-hour fun-filled visit to Zambeta's Taverna that featured the Greek shipping monarch

and Melina breaking up hundreds of dollars worth of crockery.

The escapade not only entertained the customers but even pleased the club owner, who presented Aristotle with a $650 tab for food, drink—and the broken china.

The fun started about 2:30 A.M. when Onassis, Melina—of *Never on Sunday* and *Topkapi* fame—and several others arrived at the cabaret.

No sooner had they settled down in their seats than Costas Zambetas, Greece's top bouzouki (a stringed instrument, player, struck out a tune for a wild Greek folk dance by Melina.

Onassis remained at the table, puffing on his cigar and applauding. Then all at once Ari and the others started breaking plates and throwing fruit on the dance floor. A waiter kept up a steady supply of new plates from the kitchen.

Ari and Melina then picked up the tablecloth full of plates and glasses and smashed the whole lot. After the applause for their act subsided, Melina shouted to Onassis, "If we only had one of your planes to burn as well!"

Writer Max Wilks, who was with the group, commented the next day: "It was the wildest time I ever had in my life."

Melina wasn't Onassis' only interest while he was courting Maria. Columnist Earl Wilson one time wrote:

"Wouldn't it be amusing now if Anita Ekberg, the Swedish Body Beautiful, made off with Maria Callas'

friendly neighborhood millionaire, Aristotle Onassis, locks, stocks, and yachts?

"Anita's long-time love, good-looking Rod Taylor, now broken off from her 'temporarily,' says:

" 'From what Anita's told me, he's been interested for a long time.'

"Onassis was reported admiring Anita somewhere on the fringes of Bob Hope's *Call Me Bwana* which Anita's filming with Hope in London . . ."

But always it was back to Maria. It seemed that wherever the *Christina* went—even when Sir Winston and Lady Churchill were guests, as they often were—Maria was always along with Ari.

Or almost always. There was another night, perhaps a significant one, when Maria didn't tag along with her multimillionaire playboy pal when he went nightclubbing in Istanbul in mid-September of 1963.

His companion that night was Princess Lee Radziwill.

The conversation was light and gay, but at one point it became serious. Onassis had inquired about the health of Lee's sister, Jackie, who a few weeks before had given birth to a little boy named Patrick, who died twenty-four hours later.

Wouldn't it be a good idea if Lee phoned Jackie and invited her to go on a pleasant, restful cruise on the *Christina*, Aristotle wondered?

Lee thought that was a wonderful, wonderful idea . . .

Chapter 14

AND JACKIE SAILS WITH ARI . . .

THERE are those who thought when Aristotle Socrates Onassis asked Princess Lee Radziwill to invite Jacqueline Kennedy to gad about with him on his yacht that the Greek king of the sea had ulterior motives.

At the time, he owed the United States for the insured mortgage on one ship, in a few days was obligated to pay another $1,400,000 on another, and any number of complicated matters involving Onassis' shipping activities were hanging fire in Washington.

Many wondered whether Aristotle wasn't trying to get on President Kennedy's right side.

But if indeed such thoughts had coursed at all through Onassis' agile mind, nothing would have been a bigger waste of his valuable time.

President Kennedy had a particular preference and fondness for a great many persons—but Aristotle Onassis wasn't one of them. The bad press Onassis received in this country in the years preceding Ken-

nedy's election to the White House, coupled with the almost daily accounts of Aristotle's meanderings with Maria Callas, made the President emotionally indifferent to the peripatetic Greek.

Kennedy didn't turn his back on Onassis, but he never encouraged opportunities that might tend to lead to the type of camaraderie Aristotle enjoyed with Sir Winston Churchill.

Jackie was well aware of her husband's sentiments when Lee phoned with Onassis' offer to sail on the *Christina*. White House sources at that time said the President was not happy over the invitation to his wife, and even less pleased when she expressed her wish to accept.

But Kennedy was all too aware of Jackie's need for rest and recuperation after the ordeal of losing the baby. He also knew that she was happiest when she could spend vacations with her sister. So he did not make an issue of it.

However, he admonished Jackie against being too conspicuous in public with Onassis and to avoid being photographed in his company.

An example of the extremes the White House went to in trying to obliterate any impression that Jackie would be consorting with Onassis may be found in the way Pamela Turnure, the First Lady's press secretary, handled the release containing the vacation itinerary.

The release spoke only of a cruise on the Mediterranean that was to follow a stay at the villa of another Greek shipping magnate, Markos Nomikos. Jackie

had stayed at Niarchos' place once before, in 1961, and the tone of the announcement seemed to indicate that this was simply a return visit. Nowhere in the release was Onassis mentioned, and there was just a passing reference to the cruise Jackie intended to take.

"Would Aristotle Onassis be on the *Christina* when Mrs. Kennedy went sailing on the Mediterranean?" one of the White House reporters asked Miss Turnure during a press briefing about Jackie's projected trip.

"I know of no such plan," Miss Turnure replied. "Prince Radziwill has obtained the use of the yacht from Mr. Onassis and Princess Radziwill is also going along."

To the White House press corps, it was altogether possible that such a magnanimous gesture from the giant of shipping to the Polish prince should have occurred. The Radziwills had been frequent shipboard companions of Onassis in the past.

To sweeten the press conference with a little hard fact, Miss Turnure let drop the news that the President's wife would be accompanied on the cruise by Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., the Undersecretary of Commerce, and his wife.

Following the press briefing, everything seemed to be under control. In the nation's press, Jackie's trip was being treated as a simple vacation for rest and recuperation. All was well except . . .

Except for the news that had come to President Kennedy's attention via the White House grapevine. This was a different source of news, more often than

not made up of idle gossip or malicious innuendo. But in an office as sensitive as the Presidency, it was a kind of news that could not be ignored. What if one of the tales turned out to be true?

The rumor—the gossip—that was beguiling President Kennedy at this moment was a tale about Princess Lee and Aristotle Socrates being seen just a little too often in each other's company. The stories would have little meaning except that the Princess was, after all, the sister-in-law of the President of the United States.

Kennedy had this troublesome talk tucked away in the back of his mind when Pierre Salinger, the Presidential press secretary, a frown on his usually affable face and the raw end of a chewed-up cigar in his mouth, approached the Chief Executive in his office.

It is said that Kennedy looked up, swiftly appraised his press secretary's dour face, and asked, "What's bugging you, Pierre? You look like you're sitting on a crisis."

Salinger took the cigar out of his mouth and edged closer to the desk.

"I think you'd better look at this," he said crisply.

Kennedy took a sheet of paper from Salinger. It was an Associated Press story from the teletype machine in the washroom of Salinger's office, beside the President's. The machine was kept there to muffle the constant clatter of keys that would otherwise disturb the people in the press secretary's office.

The story was datelined Athens. As Kennedy read the story, his features also took on some of the gloom

hanging over Salinger's face. He didn't like the story anymore than his aide had.

It was about a front-page editorial in the anti-government newspaper *Vima* (Tribune) in Athens. It was an open attack on Jacqueline Kennedy's plan to visit Greece. The newspaper suggested that the trip might be interpreted as an expression of favoritism toward the government party. It made the point that the trip ought to be put off until after the parliamentary elections of November 3.

"The announcement of Mrs. Kennedy's visit makes us feel sad," said *Vima*'s front page editorial. "This sadness derives from the fact that the present U. S. government, just like its predecessor, its diplomatic representatives, and the U. S. Information Services, remains always outside the climate and reality of the countries with whom it is linked and cooperative.

"Of course Mrs. Kennedy's trip here has no substantial meaning, as we said earlier. There are reasons, however, both psychological and political, which suggest its postponement.

"But the trip will be made and yet another blunder will be added to the many made so far by our American friends in Greece."

Kennedy put the story on his desk and glanced up at Salinger.

"It doesn't look so good," he said quietly. "But after what Jackie's been through I'm not sure I would want to ask her to cancel—or even postpone—the trip. This may be just one Greek editor sounding off. Let's see if anything else develops."

The White House kept an eye out for further copy

from Athens but there were no other editorial outbursts against the First Lady's visit. Meanwhile, Jack did speak to Jackie about the *Vima* attack, but he also assured her he didn't think it was significant enough to warrant a postponement of her trip. She needed the therapy of change and rest: her doctor had urged her to take a vacation.

Before she could decide where to go, Princess Lee had phoned with the invitation to holiday in Greece.

"Aristotle suggested that you might like to take a cruise aboard the *Christina,*" Lee is said to have told Jackie.

Jackie leaped at the invitation. She told Lee that she would be ready to fly to Greece within a fortnight, but White House insiders reported that the President did not react to the offer with enthusiasm.

"There were those stories about Onassis and Lee," one old Kennedy confidante related. "Those stories must have started when Lee went with Onassis on a cruise just before the invitation to Jackie.

"I had even heard that Maria Callas' husband had contributed to some of the scuttlebutt by saying Ari had tossed over Maria for Lee.

"All this tended to make association with Onassis somewhat of a personal compromise for a member of the First Family. That was why the White House tried to hide the fact that Onassis would be on the cruise aboard his own yacht."

But once Jackie's vacation was under way, any doubts as to whether Onassis was going to be on the cruise were answered when Ari sailed up in the *Christina*'s launch to pick up his guest at Nomikos' villa

in Kavouri. They were off together to the yacht anchored a half mile off shore.

The *Christina* had hardly lifted anchor and set sail for its first port of call, Istanbul, when Salinger was back in Kennedy's office in the White House. Again his face was grim. Again he had an AP story. This one was datelined Washington.

It was a blast at Jackie by Representative Oliver Bolton (R.-Ohio), who took the First Lady to task for sailing with Onassis. Bolton had complained that the modern Midas had not paid the United States insured mortgage on one of his ships and in a few days was due to make a $1,400,000 payment on another.

"If Onassis were an American shipowner, a clear conflict of interest question would be raised," Bolton complained.

"Under other circumstances, would it not be the subject of bitter criticism if the American shipowner with ship in mortgage default to the U. S. Maritime Administration were to turn over to the disposal of a Presidential and Department of Commerce party a luxury ship, with 60-man crew, including two coiffeurs and dance bands at a personal cost of many tens of thousands of dollars?"

President Kennedy is said to have finally lost his cool when he read Bolton's tirade.

"I'm going to phone Jackie and tell her to get the hell off that ship as soon as she can," he is reported to have told Salinger.

As if the AP story wasn't enough, Kennedy had to contend with an even more disturbing communica-

tion that reached him from the State Department. Jackie's presence on Onassis' yacht appeared to be a case of one-upmanship, the report said.

"Rumors persist in Athens that Onassis invited Mrs. Kennedy to sail with him because Stavros Niarchos had had Princess Margaret as a guest aboard his yacht . . ."

Aristotle just had to beat Stavros' time.

Boiling at the implication, even if only a rumor, that his wife was being used as a pawn in a status struggle between two Greek barons of the shipping lanes, Kennedy promptly put a call in by radiotelephone to the *Christina.*

"Get off the ship," he is reported to have told Jackie, "even if you have to swim to shore."

The Kennedy confidante who attributes those quotes to the late President revealed that Kennedy was infuriated by Jackie's refusal to leave the cruise —and he was even more outraged, the confidante said, when she apparently deliberately scorned her husband by being seen in public with the man who was at cross-purposes with the United States government.

In his biography, *Onassis,* Willi Frischauer underscores the President's urgent conversations with his wife in a different light: "Onassis took his sister Artemis along, but whenever the yacht was in port he tried to keep out of sight, until Roosevelt told him that Jackie had noticed his reticence and appreciated his attitude but insisted on his joining them whenever they went ashore. They visited Istanbul and, of course, Ithaca, Onassis making a splendid guide

and diverting traveling companion. Almost every day throughout the trip, the President and his wife talked over the *Christina*'s radiotelephone."

Indeed they did talk—but most of the conversation was from this side of the Atlantic. The President talked himself blue in the face to get Jackie to leave Onassis, but it was all in vain.

The story of the trip is on the record: a radiant Jackie Kennedy in Istanbul, for example, standing before the famed Blue Mosque built by Sultan Ahmed I, accepting the cheers of thousands of wildly enthusiastic Turks who had come to greet her.

Flanking Jackie as she received the heartwarming reception were the two men who had just escorted her off the palatial yacht now lying at anchor in the Straits of Bosphorus.

On her left was Roosevelt, on her right the rather short, dapper companion with silvery straight hair, large nose, and eyes weighted with heavy pouches. Everyone whispered his name—"He's Aristotle Onassis, who is Mrs. Kennedy's host aboard the *Christina* . . ."

As the cheering crowd finally fell silent to hear America's young queen speak, her words were brief but filled with sincerity and warmth as she thanked the people for their welcome. Then she concluded her remarks with these words: "I will return when my husband is no longer President . . ."

The date was October 1, 1963.

And at that very moment in Washington, President Kennedy was conferring with his staff about a trip he was going to make to Texas the following month.

In Istanbul, Jackie knew nothing about what was going on in Washington and her husband's plans to visit San Antonio, Houston, Fort Worth—and Dallas. She had no idea either that she would accompany her husband on that trip. She was 7,000 miles from Dallas, 5,000 miles from the capital—and she was having a ball.

The *Christina,* Jacqueline Kennedy still aboard, sailed on to its next port of call.

With Jackie on the main deck leaning against the rail, Onassis beside her, the graceful vessel turned southward from Istanbul in the bright Aegean sun. Its destination now was Crete, island of the legendary King Minos, fabled home of the maiden-devouring Minotaur, a monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull.

In the mythology of ancient Greece, the Minotaur devoured seven maidens every ninth year.

And the gods of ancient Greece never dined better than Jackie or Onassis' other guests. For stored in the yacht's commodious larder were cases of champagne, buckets of caviar, dried mullets packed in ice, cartons of canned hams, and crates of grapes, black figs, pears, peaches and pomegranates. On ice were a large supply of long-stemmed red roses and gladioli.

No one yet knew where the cruise would lead, but it was hinted the yacht would eventually visit the Greek islands that line the Turkish coast as far as Rhodes, and then make stops in Lebanon, Israel, and Egypt. But when someone confronted Onassis with the question, he smiled and answered, "They will just go to this or that island. Mrs. Kennedy is the

captain. That's the beauty of it. We make up our minds as we go along."

When night fell on the *Christina* as she cut through the calm sea, a gay shipboard dinner party brought the passengers together in the main dining room. Paired together in this cozy fashion were Roosevelt and his wife, Radziwill and his wife, and Onassis with Jackie—his future wife.

In spite of the apparent lack of any itinerary, the *Christina* appeared to tack on purpose as she left Crete and turned toward the scorpion-shaped island of Scorpios that Onassis had recently purchased.

Ashore, the entire party toured the island's luxuriant stands of pine and its lush groves of olive trees. The impression of sheer magnificence was complete as Onassis' guests withdrew to the twenty-room bungalow whose walls glittered with art masterpieces and whose decor shone in understated elegance.

One of the guests tells how Jackie extolled the beauty of the place. "It's simply magnificent," she is reported to have said.

"This is nothing," Onassis waved his hand grandly. "Wait until you see what I am planning to build at the top of the hill."

He took Jackie to the window and pointed to a picturesque rise where bulldozers were already at work leveling the top of the hill.

"I am going to build a copy of the Cretan palace of Knossos up there," Onassis explained. "It will have 180 rooms . . . and there will be hanging gardens falling away from the top down to the beach . . ."

He let his words drift away for a moment as Jackie

stood entranced, waiting to hear more about the grandeur of magnificence her host was planning.

Unexpectedly, Onassis asked with a facetious air, "By the way, how many rooms do you have in the White House?"

"Oh, not nearly as many as you will have in your palace," Jackie replied modestly. "But I have grown very attached to the place . . . you see, I've done a lot of redecorating and I feel a lot of me is there. Can you understand how I feel?"

"Of course, of course," Onassis said with a wave of hand. "I have heard a great deal about your efforts to restore the White House and I am very impressed. Perhaps you will help me to decorate Knossos when it is finished?"

Jackie smiled and whispered, "Perhaps . . ." Her voice dropped a little. "When the time comes . . ."

When they joined the other guests, there was a sumptuous feast of roast suckling pig, topped with retsina, the Greek after-dinner wine. Then, at midnight, the party went back to the *Christina* to retire.

The next morning, a small vessel sailed out from the nearby fishing village of Nidre at the edge of Levkas and delivered forty-four pounds of fresh-caught lobster to the *Christina*. Then the yacht lifted anchor and continued on its way over the blue Ionian Sea to its next uncharted stop.

That's the way it went for the next two weeks . . . aimless cruising in calm, blue seas. But the last days of the cruise were beset by stormy weather, forcing the yacht to put up in the snug harbor of Levkas. This turn of events enabled Jackie and the other

guests to visit their host's island paradise one more time.

When the weather cleared, Jackie finally left the storm-tossed yacht, stopping for a brief visit as a guest in the royal palace of Morocco's King Hassan II.

When Jackie, sunburned and beaming, returned to the capital on October 17, she was greeted by her husband and children, Caroline and John, Jr., at the airport. What, if anything, Jack said to Jackie about her disregard of his messages to leave the yacht isn't known. But this much is a matter of historical fact:

Jack and Jackie went to their home in Atoka, deep in Virginia's hunt country, and it was there that he laid it on the line to her. He told her that he was in trouble politically, that the polls reflected a drop in his popularity, and that if he hoped to be re-elected in November of 1964 he would have to start campaigning very shortly.

The President knew that his wife was not a formidable campaigner in the ordinary aggressive political sense, yet the charm of her shyness, which she could project in public, had made her a trump card during his 1958 campaign for the Senate and his 1960 run for the Presidency. Now, more than at any time in the past, Jack needed her beside him—and would Jackie be willing to join him in his kickoff campaign to win voters in the following November's election?

Jackie said she was. Then she asked where this trip would take them.

"To Texas," the President said. "We're going to be there for two days. We'll have stops in San Antonio, Houston, Fort Worth, and Dallas . . ."

It was in Dallas that an assassin's bullet ended the life of the youthful President and overnight remolded Jacqueline Kennedy from a woman into a goddess.

She drew her own profile in courage after the horrendous tragedy as she lay protectively over her husband's body on the dash to the hospital. She made her own mark with her resolute determination to stay beside the casket in her blood-spattered pink suit on the flight back to Washington. Her regal and dignified bearing during the harrowing weekend of the funeral had served to conquer the nation's heart for Jackie.

When she walked away from the White House into private life, her image grew. She was worshiped as the loveliest ornament of our time. Wherever Jackie went, she was treated like royalty. There were many who called her "the dowager queen, waiting for the restoration of the throne."

Their meaning was clear. They felt that Jackie was biding her time until her brother-in-law, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, was elected President. But Jackie knew that there was room for only one First Lady at a time in Washington, no matter how spacious the accommodations of the White House may be —and that First Lady would be Bobby's wife, Ethel.

Even Onassis' Cretan palace of Knossos could only accommodate one *first lady,* despite its 180 rooms.

But Knossos was still a building and wasn't to be ready for occupancy for quite some time. And the time had not yet come to think about the palace, although it certainly could have flashed in her mind

often as she reminisced about the joy she had found on Scorpios in those happier days.

Perhaps, too, flashes of her last pleasant voyage came to Jackie for a brief moment after the funeral when the mourners came to pay their respects to her at the White House. One of the first persons to console her was Aristotle Socrates Onassis. He flew to Washington the instant the news of the assassination reached him.

Jackie never forgot that visit of condolence. The sincerity of Onassis' concern, the warmth of his offer of undying friendship made an indelible impression on the young widow.

Here, perhaps, was a man whose protection she might accept.

Chapter 15

JACKIE'S SEARCH

After Jack Kennedy's death, Jackie began a search for something.

It wasn't a new quest for her. She had been pursuing this elusive object since she was a little girl barely eleven years old.

That was when the roof fell in on Jackie's happy childhood world because the man who had brought joy into her young life, her father, was divorced from her mother. It was like the end of the world for Jackie.

Her father had been Jackie's best friend, and in her memory in the nearly thirty years that passed since that heartbreaking day no man had ever meant as much to her as John Vernou Bouvier, III.

Although her stepfather, Hugh D. Auchincloss, whom her mother married two years after the divorce, made every effort to give his adopted daughter all the worldly comforts, it was not enough.

The quiet, shy little girl could never forget her own father, and in her daily life she became withdrawn.

She brooded because she missed her father and the things they did together, things her stepfather didn't seem able to or wouldn't do with her.

"Her father was the closest person in her life," a friend of Jackie's said. "Without him she was desolate."

John Bouvier was a full-time father. He would take his daughter to the Central Park Zoo, a short walk from the family's Manhattan apartment. He loved animals as much as Jackie did and let her keep a pet rabbit in one of the duplex's many bathtubs. When she was six he gave her a pony, and he often walked ahead of the mount holding the reins so Jackie wouldn't be frightened. He helped Jackie with her homework and when she had questions he answered them as simply and completely as he could. He coached her in tennis and he took her to the opera and to the ballet.

Her life on her stepfather's estate in Merrywood, Virginia, was gracious, dignified, and peaceful—but not what she wanted. Her day-to-day activities spelled drudgery and boredom, and even the high social contacts that surrounded her life did not gratify her.

She went to the best schools, but they couldn't cure Jackie's unhappiness and insecurity. She once took the time to analyze that period of her life and here is how she put it:

"Newport—when I was about nineteen, I knew I didn't want the rest of my life to be there. I didn't want to marry any of the young men I grew up with—not because of them but because of their life. I didn't know what I wanted. I was still floundering.

"The boys I knew were beetle-browed intellectual types who'd discuss very serious things with me. Nothing romantic at all."

Yet when she finally married, the man she chose was an intellectual—and very serious. From the moment she met the young Congressman from Massachusetts, Jackie knew that his one ambition and goal in life was to be President of the United States.

But Jackie was not entirely happy with the prospect of being a politician's wife. She loved Jack, of course—but not his professional pursuit. Consequently she served primarily as decoration, never a full partner. Yet it was the kind of public show the Kennedy family wanted of Jackie. It helped Jack to the Presidency.

During Jack's thousand days in the White House, Jackie was poised, charming, and skillful in her ways as First Lady. When she wanted to, she could preside over the Executive Mansion with an easy, confident manner.

But she was also untrammeled and unpredictable.

For example, take the time Jackie decided to take a two-week trip to India and Pakistan. The President was flabbergasted. He had been planning an Asian tour himself at some future date and Jackie would have gone with him just as she had accompanied him to Paris, Vienna, and London on his earlier state visits to those capitals.

Jack had to explain to his wife that her trip, during Thanksgiving, would be a traumatic shock to the nation. Not only would she be away for the holiday, but also for the birthdays of Caroline and John-John, who would be celebrating on November 25 and 27.

This is said to have been one of the few times that Jack had been able to exercise his will over Jackie. She put off the trip until the following March.

But after this hegira, Jackie had her way again whenever she decided she needed—or wanted—a vacation. So it came to pass that she not only needed, but wanted, that Mediterranean holiday which she took in early October, 1963, with Aristotle Onassis.

Then came the trip to Dallas. It was the last journey Jackie would make with her husband. The assassin's bullets fired that November 22, 1963, brought unspeakable sadness to the vivacious, fun-loving First Lady. It was then, during the funeral, that the nation took Jackie to its heart as it watched her dignity and calm in her public hours of grief. She was a tragic young queen in every sense of the word.

When Aristotle Onassis led the line of mourners who came to the White House to pay their respects to Jackie, no one at the time—nor for nearly five years afterward—ever suggested that she was romantically interested in Onassis, or that he was interested in her.

How could anyone believe the 30-year-old former First Lady had the remotest interest in a man like Onassis, who at sixty-two was old enough to be Jackie's father? Moreover, the mere statistical comparisons would have made the match seem bizarre.

Onassis is five feet five inches tall, Jackie is five feet seven.

Ari, a Greek born in Turkey, is of the Greek Orthodox faith. Jackie is a Roman Catholic.

Over and above all else, unlike any of her other escorts, the Golden Greek was a divorced man, whose

wife had accused him of adultery at one point in the proceedings.

His escapades with Maria Callas, his crockery-smashing binge with Melina Mercouri, and all his other widely publicized playboy activities certainly didn't qualify him in many minds as the type of man Jackie should date, let alone marry.

And his shadowy business practices that became the focal points of Congressional inquiries and court proceedings did nothing to enhance his image as a prospective bridegroom for the nation's tragic queen.

Yet as the young widow emerged from her year of mourning, it became almost a regular event to see the *Christina* moored in the Hudson as Onassis began to see Jackie without fanfare and fuss. And when they were seen together on rare occasions, no one imagined anything more than a platonic relationship between them.

Nor did anyone think much about Jackie's occasional cruises with Onassis in the Caribbean and other exotic blue waters.

Meanwhile, when they talked about romance for Jackie, other men drew the spotlight. They were men who would excite almost any woman from late adolescence to middle age.

There was Mike Nichols, the director, who squired Jackie to opening nights and to Coney Island for hot dogs and rides. Then there was John Carl Warnecke, the architect who designed and worked closely with Jackie on her husband's tomb in Arlington National Cemetery.

George Plimpton, the dashing do-it-yourself author

of *The Paper Lion*, was another, as was Paul Mathias, the New York correspondent of *Paris Match*.

Antonio Garrigues y Diaz Canabate, the Spanish Ambassador to the Vatican, became the hottest bet for Jackie's hand for a time a couple of years ago. But he was eventually ruled out as "too old." His age is the same as Onassis'.

Former Deputy Defense Secretary Roswell Gilpatric and attorney Michael V. Forrestal were other eligible bachelors who escorted Jackie and were deemed prospective candidates for marriage.

Then along came the man whom the headlines and magazine covers boldly forecast would become Jackie's husband: David Ormsby Gore, the distinguished Lord Harlech of England and a long-time friend of the Kennedy family. He had been widowed in 1967 when his wife was killed in an auto crash, and he was the "logical" choice for the elegant and beautiful Jackie.

But Lord Harlech was everyone's choice except the lady over whom all the fuss was about.

Jackie's heart was elsewhere . . .

Chapter 16

ARI TO MARRY JACKIE!

In early June, 1968, after the assassination of her brother-in-law Senator Robert F. Kennedy as he was carrying the family torch toward the White House in JFK's footsteps, Jackie and another brother-in-law, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, cruised on the *Christina* in the Mediterranean.

After a few days, Ted abruptly left for home while Jackie stayed behind. It was during that interval that her romance with Aristotle Socrates Onassis reached full flower and they reached a complete understanding about their future.

Ted had seen the handwriting on the bulkhead and didn't like what it spelled out. That was why he was in a hurry to get away.

Aristotle and Jackie both knew, as well as Ted, the formidable problems not only she, but the young Senator and his family, faced back home once they announced their plans to marry.

Onassis was not a Roman Catholic; he was a divorced man, a playboy, and a man of immense wealth

little known for generosity or wisdom. He did not fit the imagination of most Americans who for nearly five years had been playing the game of trying to pick Jackie's new husband with fastidious, even ruthless, discrimination.

But it was Ari's and Jackie's life, and it was theirs to lead. Yet before they could marry, certain critical problems had to be ironed out. Most important was the religious question.

When Jackie returned to the United States, she went to see Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston and long-time Kennedy family friend who had officiated at Jackie's wedding to Jack in 1953. Cushing had already received a number of calls from persons identified with the late President's administration and members of the family. As the Cardinal would later reveal: "They wanted to stop all this from taking place—namely, that Jack's widow, God rest him, would marry Aristotle Socrates Onassis."

The pressure built up. Jackie was besieged by those same friends and members of the family who had appealed to Cushing; but her mind had been made up because of the encouragement she had received from the Cardinal.

"I encouraged and helped her," is how Archbishop Cushing put it later.

Meanwhile, Aristotle followed Jackie to New York and there were frequent dinners at her Fifth Avenue apartment overlooking Central Park, and occasionally they dined out in some of the city's finest restaurants.

Then, in September, Jackie and Ari went to Palm Beach, then Hyannis Port—where finally and at last

the former First Lady introduced the Greek charmer to her in-laws, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy, and revealed that they had made an irrevocable decision to be married.

There are reports that the couple did not wish to announce their plans publicly until about Christmas, but that a member or friend of the family—a Ted Kennedy aide was mentioned most prominently—leaked the news to the Boston *Herald-Traveler.*

In a copyrighted story, the newspaper said that Onassis and Jackie "are making plans to be married within the next few weeks." The newspaper then added, "At all events, it will take place before Christmas."

The story credited a source which it called "completely knowledgeable."

The *Traveler*'s exclusive might have been regarded as just another Jackie Kennedy rumor had it not been for the response it elicited from Cardinal Cushing, who told the Associated Press that an official announcement about the report of the impending marriage "may be coming up tonight or tomorrow."

This gave the story of the Jackie-Ari nuptials surprising vitality and it refused to die despite the lack of confirmation from any quarter of the Kennedy establishment.

Stephen Smith, Jackie's brother-in-law and husband of the late President's sister, Jean, said, "I don't know anything about it. I can't confirm or deny it. If she were going to do it, Mrs. Kennedy's office would have a statement."

Jackie's secretary, Nancy Tuckerman, told the press

that the report reminded her of the rumors that Mrs. Kennedy would marry Lord Harlech.

"All I know is that when this Lord Harlech thing was going on Mrs. Kennedy said that if she ever did decide to get married the first thing she'd do would be tell the children, and then she'd tell me to issue a statement."

Later, Miss Tuckerman said, "As far as I know Mrs. Kennedy is not planning to get married."

Richard Drayne, a spokesman for brother-in-law Ted, commented in Washington, "We have no knowledge of Mrs. Kennedy's plans."

Knowledgeable Maxine Cheshire wrote in the Washington *Post* that Jackie had told a confidante several months earlier "that she was determined not to consider marriage with anyone for a number of years. She said she wanted to see her children, Caroline, ten, and John, Jr., eight, through school first and added: 'I don't even think about it.' "

All the speculation and lack of confirmation of the *Traveler*'s scoop became academic in mid-afternoon when Jackie's mother, Mrs. Auchincloss, revealed: "My daughter, Mrs. John F. Kennedy, is planning to marry Mr. Aristotle Onassis."

The statement was issued through Miss Tuckerman, who added, "I can only tell you that the wedding will probably take place next week. The time and place have not been determined. I will have more information tomorrow."

But events moved much more swiftly than even Miss Tuckerman may have envisioned. Before the evening was many hours old, Jackie Kennedy was

aboard an Olympic Airlines Boeing 707 jet winging her way to her wedding with Aristotle Onassis.

Her flight into Ari's arms began shortly after 6 P.M. when Jackie, hatless and clad in a simple gray wool sheath set off by a strand of pearls, came out of her Fifth Avenue apartment. She was accompanied by her two children, her parents, sisters-in-law Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Peter Lawford, two governesses, and a Secret Service agent.

Other Secret Service men elbowed a path through a crowd of three hundred newsmen and well-wishers who had gathered in front of the apartment house. As usual, Jackie said nothing to the press, but she appeared to be in high spirits as she hurried through the howling mob. Only the children seemed to recoil from the din.

At Kennedy Airport, the group was ushered quickly aboard the huge jet, bypassing the airline's ticket counter area. It was natural enough that the party would be spared the trouble of buying tickets. Aristotle Onassis owned the airline.

The plane in which the wedding party of eleven had boarded had originally been scheduled as Olympic's Flight 412, due to take off at 8:30 P.M. with a complement of ninety paying passengers for Athens.

The plane took off instead at 8:02 P.M. and the ninety customers remained on the ground to watch the takeoff. They had been "bumped" and made to wait for another flight an hour and a half later.

Already Aristotle was impressing Jackie with his immense influence. Even her late husband, the President of the United States, could not have appro-

priated a public carrier with such ruthless expedition.

Meanwhile, newsmen in Athens visited Onassis in his office there.

"We'll be married tomorrow or within three days at the latest," he said. "I can't say exactly when because I must first see and talk to her."

Then he made plans to meet his bride-to-be and her family at Andravida, a military airport in southern Greece.

After Jackie landed on Friday, the wedding plans crystallized swiftly. Sunday was the date set. The place was to be Aristotle's fabled hideaway of Scorpios, an island that nobody could get on or off without the boss' permission.

Newsmen and curiosity seekers had already been given a foretaste of just how effective Onassis' security screen could be in his bailiwick.

Greek coast guard patrol boats circled Scorpios and military helicopters flew overhead to discourage invaders of the Golden Greek's wish for privacy.

Even at the airport where Ari met Jackie, newsmen were ordered off the field before the jet from New York put down and they were locked in a waiting room. They missed the best picture of the year when Ari greeted Jackie with a chaste kiss on the cheek.

It wasn't until after the bride and bridegroom-to-be had taken off aboard another plane for Acton on the west coast of Greece that the press could learn what had happened outside, and then the information came secondhand from airport employees.

Onassis' security was so complete that representa-

tives of the world's greatest news media were reduced to covering their story by telescope.

From a vantage point on the neighboring island of Levkas they could see workmen cleaning and painting Scorpios' tiny chapel. They could see Caroline and John-John playing on the island and members of the wedding party swimming off the yacht in the warm waters of the Ionian Sea.

As always when the lid of security is clamped on the press, rumors began to circulate. One report had a Greek Orthodox priest coming to Scorpios to convert Jackie from Roman Catholicism and to perform the marriage rite.

Another report held that the wedding would be in the Greek Orthodox tradition but that Jackie would not convert.

And there were reports that the wedding would take place in the chapel on Scorpios and reports that the wedding would take place on the *Christina.*

It was apparent, however, that the wedding was going to be a private affair, no matter what the cost —or how much muscle the Greek police and military forces would have to exert.

Determined newsmen who were denied plane service to reach the nearest airport to Scorpios—Onassis grounded the airline which he monopolizes and the government refused to allow the press to fly in its planes—finally invaded the island by boat.

They were quickly confronted by guards and chased away. But then they managed to break the blockade of circling speedboats carrying Onassis'

"bouncers" and reached dockside where the *Christina* was anchored.

Reinforced by the yacht's crewmen, the guards pushed and shoved photographers when they stepped ashore to try for pictures of John-John, who was riding in a mini-jeep.

Achilleus Kapsambellis, supervisor of the island's personnel, threatened the newsmen with a good-sized rock, but a yacht crewman interceded. He told the reporters: "Unless you keep away we have orders to sink you."

But the invaders weren't sunk and about a hundred correspondents and photographers eventually landed. They refused to leave until Mrs. Kennedy strode down the *Christina*'s gangplank. Sleek and radiant in white slacks, black turtle-neck blouse, and dark sunglasses, Jackie spoke publicly for the first time since the electrifying news of her intention to marry Onassis.

"Telis and I are very happy," she said, referring to Aristotle by a name by which he had been known in the international jet set for some time.

After this brief encounter with the press, security eased somewhat and newsmen were able to pick up facts to end the famine of information that had veiled the wedding plans.

On the Greek mainland, the Onassis-Kennedy nuptials were being billed as "the wedding of the century." A wave of "Jackie fever" swept Greece as many became convinced that Onassis' prize was the biggest thing since the liberation of Greece from the Ottoman Turks.

Suddenly Greece was not a Balkan backwater but the very center of world attention. The average Greek was delighted and starry-eyed with the instant glamor.

Even the stern military-backed regime thrilled to the romance of Jackie and Ari, now the most famous Greek in the world. The newspaper *Acropolis*, mouthpiece of the government, gushed an expression of the general excitement gripping Greeks everywhere: "This is the biggest thing that has hit Greece in a long time. The best public relations man in the world could not have dreamed up such a thing to publicize Greece."

Not in their wildest imaginings could the men who seized power in Greece eighteen months before have hoped for such a benefit.

The marriage of the glamorous former First Lady of the United States to a Greek national in good standing was probably the best boost for Greek tourism that could be imagined. And tourism is vital to the country's economy.

The junta also had an idea that the marriage also could make the regime more acceptable in the minds of many people abroad.

But as the roar of approbation was sweeping across Greece, another sound was being heard in the distance—the hurt cry of the injured worshipers at a shrine that had lost its idol . . .

Chapter 17

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

And millions cried out that the goddess had fallen off her pedestal.

Everyone from the man and woman in the street to the conglomerate retinue of columnists, analysts, and dissectors of humankind had a point of view concerning Jacqueline Kennedy's decision to marry Aristotle Socrates Onassis.

"Oh, but he's too old," they were saying from Moscow, Indiana, to Moscow, USSR.

"I wouldn't do it if I were Jackie," sighed a girl in Frankfurt, Germany. "He has no likeness to John Kennedy."

"Lamentable, lamentable," cried the headline of a Madrid newspaper.

"He's a foreigner," complained Judy Klemesrud in the New York *Times*.

"He is foreign, he is old, he is indecently rich," wrote Harriet Van Horne in the New York *Post*. "And he has the rough, dark looks of a Mafia villain on TV."

It would take endless columns to weave the criticism and complaints into the whole tapestry of opposition voiced against the marriage.

But wasn't there another side to the story?

Jackie's and Onassis' side?

Let's see what was said.

"He's too old," the most common plaint. When Jack Kennedy married Jackie, he was thirty-six and she was twenty-four—a dozen years older. If he were forty-seven, as Onassis was at the time in 1953, would that cry have been raised against the then Senator? If Kennedy were alive today, he would have been fifty-two years old. And Jackie is only thirty-nine. Next year Jackie will be forty—and Onassis sixty-three. Does the age difference still seem that great?

"He has no likeness to John Kennedy," was another critical comment.

Did Mike Nichols or Lord Harlech or George Plimpton or any of Jackie's other escorts have John Kennedy's likeness—more to the point, was Jackie committed to marry a man who would constantly remind her of her first husband?

Agreed, they don't look alike.

What are the other differences?

Jack Kennedy was magnetic, charming, warm, and outgoing. But there are many who say Onassis also has those qualities. His retinue of friends among the world's richest and most successful in every field of endeavor, from politics to industry, insist that this Greek has more than mere riches to retain so many friendships over the years.

The Madrid newspaper that screamed "lamentable,

lamentable" and I harped on the age difference in its story never questioned the age of its own countryman, Ambassador Garrigues, who is even older than Onassis, when he was being groomed in their columns as Jackie's prospective husband.

"He's a foreigner," as stated by Judy Klemesrud in the *Times*, is an expression that decent Americans with a good upbringing had banished from their vocabulary shortly after the Mayflower landed its first contingent of "foreigners" on Plymouth Rock. And after all, Jackie is just as much a foreigner to the Greeks as Onassis may be to us.

Did anyone call Lord Harlech a foreigner when he was squiring Jackie? Or is it fashionable to categorize as foreigners those persons from countries whose ethnic representation in the United States is too small to summon an indignant vocal stink?

Harriet Van Horne touched all the bases when she said Onassis is "foreign," "old," "indecently rich," and "has the rough, dark looks of a Mafia villain on TV." That characterization most closely sinks to the depth of journalistic depravity to which the late Dorothy Kilgallen descended when she panned Nina Khrushchev, the former Soviet Premier's wife on her visit to this country for wearing clothes that made her look like a "peasant."

Since when has a person's hard-featured looks made them a candidate for a columnist's whipping post? Should we now equate all persons with "rough, dark looks" with membership in the Mafia? Albert Anastasia, the chief executioner of Murder Inc., and Anthony "Lucky" Luciano, the one-time head of the

Mafia's narcotics operations in this country, were two of the handsomest men anyone could meet—but would Miss Van Horne have wanted to meet them?

Onassis' business practices have been under question for many years, too—but so were the Kennedy family's back in 1960 when the squeeze and strong-arming was on to elect Jack as President. And Jack was just as much a part of that campaign as any member of his family. And Joseph P. Kennedy's business practices were never called exemplary. He had his way of making his millions, and Onassis has his.

Lastly, the question of religion. Cardinal Cushing answered everyone when he said, "Why can't she marry whomever she wants to marry and why should I be condemned (for advising her to marry) and why should she be condemned?"

This is a Prince of the Church speaking, discussing a woman of the Roman Catholic faith who had decided to marry a divorced man who is Greek Orthodox.

Philip Van Rensselaer, the society columnist, perhaps put it most eloquently in his appraisal of the marriage when he wrote:

"It is only natural that such a woman should attract the attention of Aristotle Onassis, the Golden Greek, one of the richest and most powerful men in the world. Jackie is the super-celebrity of the world today, and Onassis ranks somewhere close to her. It's as natural as CIT and Xerox being attracted to each other.

"Jackie was married to the most powerful man in the U.S.A. from one of the most powerful families in

the U.S.A. so it is only natural that she should be drawn to this powerful Greek . . .

"Jackie had great love from the late President. He was good-looking, brilliant, and vigorous, a child of the gods. Now she will have love and money. It is inconceivable to think how grandly she will exist. There is nothing she will not be able to buy.

"Jackie has moved on into a world like heaven—a different kind of Camelot—far, far removed from the struggles of us poor mortals. She has joined the gods, become a heroine, and passed into a world that only a dozen people in the universe will ever know.

"Farewell, Mrs. Kennedy! We have loved and revered you. Hail Madame Onassis!"

That is probably the fairest analysis of what many have come to call the "strangest marriage of the century."

Yet there is still one other consideration—the most important of all. How does the lady feel?

In marrying Onassis, Jackie said: "I have found the peace I sought."

Wasn't that what all Americans had hoped and prayed Jackie would find as they watched her on that harrowing weekend in 1963 and took her into their hearts?

During her dispute with William Manchester over the book *Death of a President*, Jackie said the American public was ready to forgive her anything, "unless I run off with Eddie Fisher."

Perhaps she should have said Aristotle Onassis . . .

Chapter 18

AND THEN THEY WERE WED . . .

The sun that had been smiling down on Scorpios the first two days of Jackie's exciting stay on the island kingdom suddenly disappeared behind a dark bank of clouds which had drifted in from the neighboring island of Levkas shortly after daybreak.

Within an hour, wind was whipping through the olive groves, rain was falling, and the usually placid waters of the Ionian Sea were blanketed with whitecaps.

"It is a good sign," murmured a black-clad peasant woman who had come out into the storm to rubberneck across the bay where the *Christina* was moored. "They will have much happiness . . . the rain assures this."

It is an ancient tradition of the Greeks, who have a meaning for everything, that a rainy wedding means the gods on Olympus are pleased and will bless the newlyweds with fertility, prosperity, and good luck.

But rain also brings some inconveniences.

The Rev. Polycarpos Athanassiou, the 32-year-old

pastor of the Church of Kapnikarea in downtown Athens, which is the chapel of Athens University, could not make his journey to Scorpios by helicopter because of the turbulence. But no one had any doubt that he'd arrive and officiate at the wedding.

Since Onassis owns the sea-lanes, a launch provided by the Golden Greek assured the priest a safe crossing despite the rough seas.

Father Polycarpos stepped off the launch at the dock smiling broadly at the knot of peasant women who had come down to the water's edge in the rain to greet the bearded prelate.

"*Iyia sou* (your health)," he said, blessing them, and then walked up the long winding path under escort of Onassis' bodyguards to the Chapel of the Little Virgin—"*Panayitsa*"—nestled midst a clutch of cypress trees surrounded by bougainvillaea and jasmine on the trellises at the gate.

Newsmen, who were allowed to form a pool to cover the ceremony because they had threatened to invade the island again if they were kept away, also arrived at Scorpios by boat. The arrangements had been worked out by Ioannis Giorgiakis, general manager of Olympic Airways.

Giorgiakis had conferred with Onassis on Saturday and convinced him that pool coverage was a better alternative than having the wrath of the world press exploding over the wedding. For three days Giorgiakis had been on the receiving end of protests and arguments from the knights of the quill who had been barred from the pre-wedding activities by the tight security measures.

But when the newsmen passed the chapel gate, they were not allowed to go beyond the flagstoned terrace. A Secret Service agent, wearing one of the "PT 109" tie pins which President Kennedy often gave friends and associates, barred them from the chapel. They were compelled to stay outside in the downpour.

Onassis, who had spent the night in his residence on the island, was the first to arrive under escort. He looked his usual immaculate and dapper self in a double-breasted blue suit and red tie. A sprig of orange blossom was pinned to his lapel just over the white handkerchief jutting to a point out of his breast pocket.

His leathered face was grim and even the greetings of "*kali mera* (good morning)" from invited guests at the chapel door failed to excite a smile out of Onassis.

Within minutes after he disappeared into the chapel, the launch from the *Christina* eased into the dock. Jackie and her entourage, who had spent the night on board, disembarked.

A gathering of the black-shawled women and their husbands who work on the island, dressed in their plain Sunday finery, stood at the edge of the walk beside the dock and applauded enthusiastically as Jackie was escorted off the boat by a Secret Service man holding an umbrella over her as a shield.

Jackie was radiant in her georgette ivory chiffon and lace two-piece mini-dress with long lace sleeves and pleated knee-length skirt. A light nylon scarf protected her hair, which was coiffeured in a bouffant with a single braid falling from the back, a ribbon

of the same color across the crown. She was wearing low-heeled shoes that matched her dress—low heels so she wouldn't tower too conspicuously over the diminutive groom. The dress was designed by Valentino, her favorite Roman couturier.

Behind her came her family—Caroline, John-John, Mr. and Mrs. Auchincloss, Jean Smith, Pat Lawford, Lee and Stash Radziwill, and their children, Anthony and Christina.

A broad toothy smile lighted Jackie's face as she made her way up the walk to the chapel. The rain did not seem to dampen her spirits and as she was about to pass the gate, she turned to the reporters and photographers and murmured a cheery "Hello."

Nearly all the bridegroom's relatives and friends were inside the flower-decorated chapel by now: Ari's daughter, Christina; his sister, Artemis; his half-sister, Mrs. Yerasimos Patronicolous, and her husband; his niece, Mrs. Panos Drakos, and her husband; Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Kokims, friends and business associates from Monte Carlo; and Olympic Airways' managing director, Ioannis Giorgiakis and his wife.

As is the custom in the Greek Orthodox marriage rite, the groom was standing to the right of the altar waiting for the bride to come down the aisle. Onassis' eyes lit up as Jackie entered the chapel and he finally managed to crack a smile.

An instant after his face took on a slightly disturbed cast as he glanced about the chapel as though searching out someone he wanted to see.

Not until Jackie had walked to the altar and stood beside him, and the wedding guests were seated in

the pews, did it become apparent why Onassis had been looking around the chapel. All at once the door opened and his son, Alexander, slipped inside and took his seat.

The celebration of the matrimonial sacrament, a procedure that dates back to the ninth century, began with the betrothal.

Father Polycarpos, garbed in a flowing gold sacramental robe, opened the ceremony by intoning, "Blessed is our God always, now and forever, and from all ages."

This was said in English, which the priest spoke well, having served for a time in the United States as deacon under Archbishop Iakovos, the primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in North and South America. He had also met Onassis in New York in 1964—but he didn't get a contribution for the church.

Father Polycarpos then blessed the wedding rings, which were on the altar, saying, "The servant of God, Jacqueline, is betrothed to the servant of God, Aristotle, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

He repeated this three times, then made the sign of the cross over the heads of the couple and placed the rings on their right hands—another tradition of the Greek marriage rite.

Then the sponsor—Ari's sister, Mrs. Garofalides—exchanged the rings between the two as a sign of union.

Immediately after a prayer for the betrothed, the

priest moved to the second, and most solemn part of the ceremony—the celebration of the sacrament of matrimony.

He conveyed good wishes to Ari and Jackie for "joy, for maintenance of the honor of your marriage in mutual faith, and for the procreation of children." Then he prayed:

"Be mindful O Lord our God of thy servants Aristotle and Jacqueline, and bless them; give to them the fruit of the womb, fair children; harmony of souls and bodies; exalt them as the cedars of Lebanon."

Then came the most colorful part of the ceremony —the crowning with the white wreaths, linked by a white satin ribbon. Mrs. Garofalides, known as the "*coumbara*" or matron of honor (there was no best man, although there can be one, and usually is in the Greek Orthodox rite), cross-switched the wreaths from Ari's and Jackie's heads three times.

Father Polycarpos then read the portion from the Gospel according to St. John which describes Jesus' first miracle of the turning of water into wine. The couple drank from a cup of wine offered by the priest, a symbol of their physical and spiritual union.

The priest finally took Ari's hand, and followed by Jackie and Mrs. Garofalides, walked them in a circle around the altar three times, a ritual called the Dance of Isaiah.

During this procession, Ari and Jackie carried the thin white lighted candles they had been holding throughout most of the service. The former First

Lady, not accustomed to Greek weddings, experienced difficulty keeping the candle upright so it wouldn't drip wax on her dress.

Caroline and John-John also held two huge candles that are traditionally carried by pages at Greek weddings, and that was their role at the rite; Onassis' children did not participate, but sat in a corner of the tiny chapel watching the ceremony.

The priest's last words of the ceremony, spoken in Greek and then in English, were mingled with the voices of the three cantors who were chanting psalms of David in the Byzantine tradition.

"Servant of God Aristotle is wedlocked to the servant of God Jacqueline, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen."

As if the guests had already been alerted to this prayer as a signal, they moved forward toward the altar and pelted Ari and Jackie with a shower of rice and sugared almonds—rice for fertility, almonds for happiness.

Some flowers were thrown in for good measure, a strictly spontaneous gesture that had no significance in the marriage tradition of the Greek Church.

Finally, Father Polycarpos took the wreaths from the couple's heads, touched them with the Gospel, and the service was over.

Ari then turned to Jackie, put his hands on her arms, drew her close to him, and kissed her warmly on the lips. She responded with equal intensity.

Caroline rushed up to her mother in the van of the well-wishers who crowded around the couple and kissed her mother first, then she put her arms around

her step-father and kissed him as well. John-John kissed his mother and shook hands with his new father.

The pool reporters and photographers got their first glimpse of the newlyweds as they emerged from the chapel after all the guests had come out. It was still pouring and everyone who had been standing outside was soaked to the skin.

Jackie beamed zestfully as she approached the reporters, escorted by Ari who was now holding her hand.

"We're very happy," she trilled.

"How do you feel, Mr. Onassis?" a reporter inquired.

His face again a mask of severity, he turned and replied curtly, "I feel very well, my boy."

As one of the Onassis guards held an umbrella protectively over the bride, Ari led his new wife to a small yellow golf cart parked outside the church gate, helped her into the vehicle, then went behind the wheel to do the driving.

Caroline clambered aboard, sat on her mother's knee, and they were off for the dock. The other guests, including John-John, followed.

They all got aboard the launch and were ferried across the choppy waters to the *Christina,* where the wedding reception and feast featuring Onassis' favorite dish, roast suckling pig, was held.

Champagne came first, and it flowed in torrents as the stewards poured the drinks for the wedding party in the ship's dining room and bar.

Father Polycarpos also accompanied the happy wed-

ding party to the *Christina,* as it is another custom of the Greek Church to invite the priest to the celebration. But it wasn't all pleasure for Father Polycarpos, for he brought along a significant document that he wanted the bridegroom to sign.

The paper contained a pledge that any children of the marriage would be brought up in the Greek Orthodox faith. Jackie did not have to sign. Only Onassis was required to.

The wedding party lasted far into the night, with champagne continuing to flow freely, the caviar buckets being returned again and again to the pantry for refills.

The guests toasted the newlyweds endlessly and danced lively Greek dances to the unrestrained blast of the bouzouki band.

Then Aristotle Socrates Onassis and Jacqueline Kennedy held hands while the band played his favorite ballad:

These are bitter summers
And you have taught me to spend them with
you . . .

But all parties must end. The music and the music-makers faded out of sound and sight and the wedding guests retired.

Jackie and Aristotle slept, too.

The wedding had one good omen that would have pleased the ancient Oracle at Delphos.

It rained all that night . . .

WHY JACKIE? WHY ARI?

THIS IS THE BOOK THAT ANSWERS ALL THE QUESTIONS: Jacqueline Kennedy is acknowledged to be the most desirable woman in the world. Why, then, did she choose to marry a short, stocky foreigner old enough to be her father? Onassis is fabulously rich; but Jackie hardly needed the money—or did she? Ari is reputed to be irresistible to women. Was Jackie, like many other famous and beautiful women, captivated by his magnetism? Was there something competitive in Jackie's desire to wed the man whom no other woman could tame? What needs, what necessities caused Jackie Kennedy to enter into the most sensational marriage of the century?

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